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HARDWARE
NINTENDO DS
Is Nintendo redefining handheld gaming?

BURNOUT 3 TAKEDOWN
Criterion proves there's no such thing as second place

PREVIEWED
TRIBES: VENGEANCE [PC]
TEKKEN 5 [PS2/ARC]
BATTLEFIELD 2 [PC]
CONFLICT: VIETNAM [PS2/XB]
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PREVIEW
FORZA MOTORSPORT
Microsoft challenges Polyphony's driving crown

RETRO
OUTRUN
The granddaddy of them all

eMag

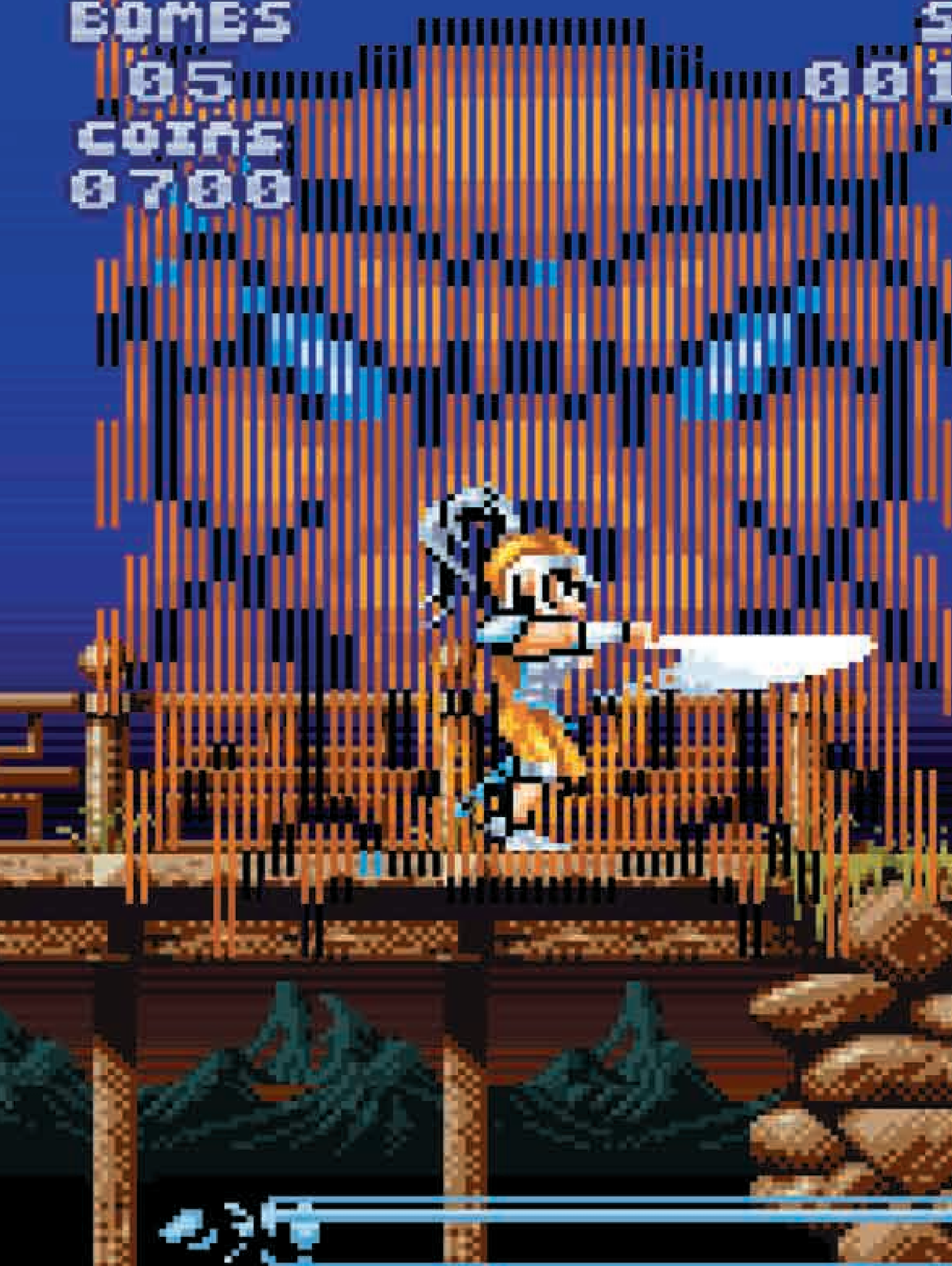
Sequels are usually met with a pretty mixed response. The gaming masses tend to leap upon them with rabid enthusiasm, while your more discerning gamer prefers to view them a little more critically, ruing the lack of originality in gaming and bemoaning the 'quick buck' mentality of some developers and publishers.

Burnout 3 is different. Adored by the critics, the *Burnout* series has consistently impressed by offering the kind of arcade racing thrills that you'd associate with Namco and SEGA, and yet it has never really been embraced by gamers in the numbers that you would expect such a quality racing title to attain.

However, with EA's backing this looks set to change, and deservedly so. Unlike many other franchises that simply go for a graphical makeover with each incarnation, *Burnout* has continued to evolve into one of the finest arcade racing games currently available. Even at this stage, *Burnout 3* is looking tantalisingly close to racing perfection…

Simon Phillips,
Group Editor



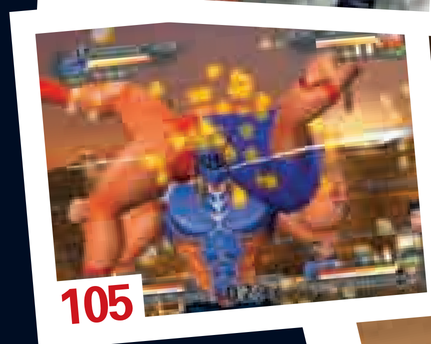

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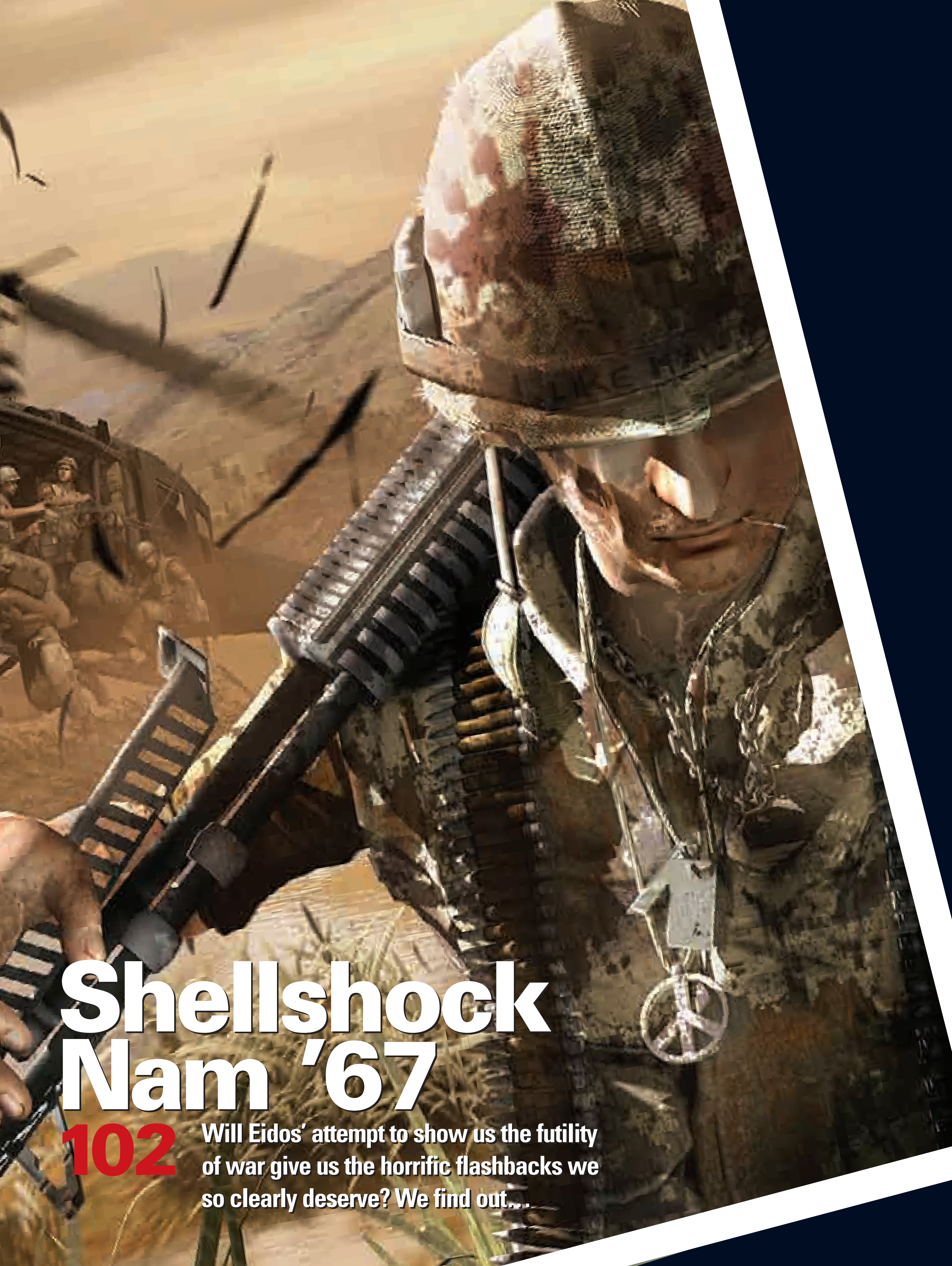
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Will Eidos' attempt to show us the futility of war give us the horrific flashbacks we so clearly deserve? We find out…

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FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS



PIRACY ISSUES AHOY AS NEW SURVEY REVEALS AN ALARMING TREND FOR ILLEGAL SOFTWARE

DESERT ISLAND DISCS



Will the news that more than half today's gamers have used illegal software raise eyebrows in the industry? Maybe, though perhaps not as many as you might expect. Certainly, the results of the survey organised by copy protection experts Macrovision highlight a growing problem. According to the poll that was carried out across gaming websites, 52 per cent of those questioned admitted to obtaining cracked software, while 33 per cent said that they had downloaded ISO files – full versions of games that have had their copy protection removed. Most worryingly, 15 per cent of gamers claimed they had used 15 or more pirated games within the last two years.

Since the survey, Macrovision has put together a white paper that offers potential solutions to the problem. The paper was presented at last month's Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) Summit and may go some way to alleviating the fears of the more reactionary members of the industry, but it's unlikely to have an impact in the near future.

Of course, the fight against piracy continues unabated. Take the recent closure of one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of counterfeit Game Boy cartridges and Nintendo goods in Taiwan, the Yudian Company. Seven employees were sent to prison for a total of over 20 years – a substantial victory for Nintendo. "The companies [these men] control have sold millions of Nintendo counterfeits around the world," said Jean Lin, manager of anti-piracy for Nintendo of America. "We applaud the Taiwan government and [its] judicial efforts to put an end to this major counterfeiting operation."

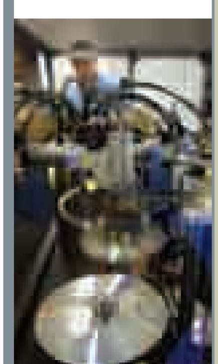
There's also the matter of the companies that make piracy possible. Electronic Arts, Vivendi Universal and Atari have issued a lawsuit against 321 Studios, accusing the company of violating copyright laws with its software back-up application, Games X Copy. Despite claims by 321 Studios that the product is designed to allow consumers to create back-ups of legally owned software, the lawsuit suggests that 321 Studios is deliberately breaching the Digital Millennium Copyright Act by allowing users to thwart protection measures. At time of going to press, no date has been set for the hearing.



Bennett: Retailers need to get involved too.



Brooker: Anti-piracy laws needn't be too harsh.



Bootleg discs can easily flood the market.

PIECES OF FAKE…

EVERYONE'S AGREED THAT PIRACY NEEDS TO BE STAMPED OUT, BUT WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO DO IT?

THE INDUSTRY BODY

Although pirates account for the majority of game counterfeiting, there's also a percentage that arises from code theft before software even hits the shelves. "Leaked code and content prior to release is a real killer and all developers, publishers, mastering, fulfilment and distribution companies must ensure absolute security," says Roger Bennett, director general of ELSPA. "There's not enough commitment to protection from publishers generally, and those that do use it don't always let us know so that our anti-piracy unit can track if and when it appears on the 'scum' market. How can we address the issue in all conscience on their behalf if the industry is not committed to ensuring that our own house is in order? Retailers in particular, all of whom have a huge vested interest in stamping out piracy, contribute nothing to the games industry anti-piracy funds, yet in many cases subscribe to music and video anti-piracy activity on an annual basis. That must change if they want us to do the job effectively."

THE PROTECTION SPECIALIST

With software piracy now growing at a rapid rate, the games industry is already counting the cost of how much damage the problem is causing. "The Electronic Software Association recently estimated that in the US alone, games revenues lost to piracy would have funded the development of over 1,600 new high-quality games," says Martin Brooker, director of sales at Macrovision Europe. "Piracy could probably be stamped out if it was strongly supported by legislation and was deemed less acceptable by society. The danger would be that Draconian measures could 'get in the way' of people enjoying their legitimately purchased content. In the current landscape, it is more practical to see anti-piracy as applying 'speed-bumps' to the roads travelled by pirates, both casual and professional."

OUR TWO CENTS

Unfortunately, while efforts continue to stamp out the problem of counterfeiting, it's a drop in the ocean compared to the prevalence of software piracy in today's market. While the number of professional pirates is relatively small, it's the number of people who use illegal software that raises serious issues. What's more, the reasons for people actually obtaining it vary across the board, and aren't solely because users enjoy performing what is essentially a criminal act. Accusations abound surrounding the quality of many games, which in turn create disillusioned gamers who aren't as willing to pay full price for games after being stung several times before. It's a vicious circle but the problem's likely to get a lot worse before it gets better.

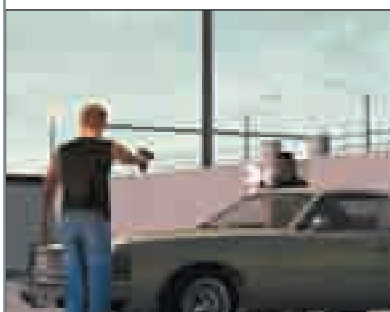
Datastream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



SCREW DRIV3R

It's not often that a soundtrack eclipses a game in terms of quality but the OST to Reflections' disappointing *Driv3r* is one such case. From classic artists such as Iggy And The Stooges (Mr Pop also lends his vocal talents to the game's voice-over, of course) to up-and-coming stars like Hope Of The States and Syntax, this could be one of the first CD soundtracks that actually does well in PAL territories. Even the *Vice City* soundtracks didn't perform as well as Rockstar would have hoped, not that we really want to dredge up that comparison again…





KONAMI 1 FRANCE 0

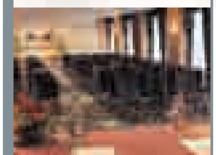
Konami of Europe has finally settled its legal dispute with the Fédération Française de Football, meaning the *Pro Evolution Soccer* series can now be sold in France. The trouble began in 2001 when the FFF alleged that Konami's use of names, likenesses, kits and logos was a breach of copyright. The Japanese firm argued that granting licensing rights exclusively to a French firm was a violation of anti-monopoly laws, which won the case for the developer.



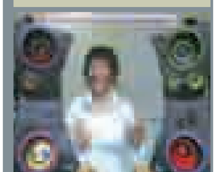


TO SUMMIT ALL UP

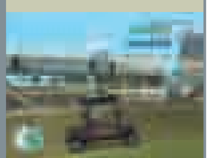
THE SECOND ELSPA GAMES SUMMIT SPARKS FIERCE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE BIG THREE



The lure of a conference bar can be pretty strong…



The EyeToy is expected to attract several imitators.



Having Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft united under one roof is a rare occurrence indeed, but the big three came together for this year's Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) Summit in London last month. As you might expect, however, key figures from each company were occasionally far from civil when it came to each other's strategies.

With this year's overly wordy topic being 'New technologies and new strategic directions: maximising profit and managing risk in a convergent entertainment world', you'd expect talk of Xbox 2, PlayStation3 and Revolution (the unashamedly pretentious new moniker for Nintendo's N5) to be rife. But while there was plenty of talk of the next generation, those who want it to arrive sooner rather than later incurred the wrath of Nintendo Europe's managing director, David Gosen.

His primary targets were Microsoft and the games media as a whole, both of which he blamed for ushering in a new wave of consoles before the current generation has run its course. "In every cycle, some manufacturer not profiting from the current cycle is eager to kick-start the next one," he proclaimed, citing the 3DO as an example of how a head start in a generation isn't always advantageous.

Gosen also had a few misplaced words for our beloved field of journalism. "For every game magazine editor bored with current products, there are hundreds of thousands of gamers around the world just discovering them," he said, seemingly oblivious to the fact that failure to report on current events in the industry is failure to do our job. The tirade didn't end there, as he described *Grand Theft Auto* as "a dead-end street" and pointed out most insightfully that "not everyone is prepared to pay a high price for a new console."

Sony Europe's president, David Reeves, on the other hand, was slightly less critical of, well, everything. He spoke fondly of the "magic price point" of £99, a markdown that would undoubtedly see the PlayStation2 installed user base explode overnight but also one that is not forthcoming in Europe just yet. He was also quick to dismiss claims that hardware sales may have peaked for Sony. "It's bullshit – it has not peaked; we're only halfway through the life cycle," he insisted. Considering that PSone hardware is





"IT'S BULLSHIT – PLAYSTATION2 HAS NOT PEAKED; WE'RE ONLY HALFWAY THROUGH THE LIFE CYCLE"
DAVID REEVES, PRESIDENT, SONY EUROPE



Industry big-shots gathered behind these very window boxes to discuss the future of gaming and engage in some fairly healthy debate.

still selling over a thousand units a week just a few months shy of its tenth birthday, you have to admit that he might have a point.

Like many of his fellow speakers, Reeves was keen to highlight his firm's commitment to attracting non-gamers and seldom-targeted demographics. In fact, the EyeToy looks as though it may become a widely copied peripheral with both Microsoft and Nintendo having implied the impending arrival of similar add-ons for their machines.

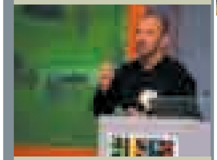
Instead of slinging abuse or answering its critics, Microsoft decided to call for reform within development through vice president Peter Moore, who laid down XNA as an example of how he felt all developers should be working in the not-too-distant future. He explained to the Summit that XNA – Microsoft's Cross-platform Next-generation Architecture – is "all about making better games faster" without so much of a mention of a taken name or a kicked ass, but his overall point was a good one – to provide developers with the necessary equipment to ensure that creativity is not overshadowed by technical efforts.

"We are, at heart, a tools company," he explained, before revealing that in the past six months Microsoft has "probably kissed goodbye to $15 million in development costs." This is another area in which XNA is being hyped, apparently allowing developers to assess products at an earlier stage to avoid wasting too much time or money on a lost cause.

But after the impressive roster of speakers had all gone home, the phrase "don't leave money on the table in the current generation" still reverberated around London's Le Meridien hotel, having been abused by many speakers over the course of the two-day event. But with Microsoft still poised to break the traditional six-year cycle with its next console (much to Gosen's outrage), what will become of the much-touted phrase and those that so proudly spoke it remains to be seen.

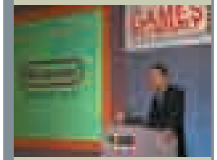
QUOTE ME HAPPY

As is so often the case at such meetings of minds, there were plenty of choice soundbites. We've done our best to pull out a few of the finest for your reading pleasure…



"The sequelisation of entertainment is something that concerns me about this industry"
Microsoft's Peter Moore, for whom many of this year's biggest earners will have numbers in the titles. *Halo 2*, anyone?

"We believe that we will have enough hardware to satisfy the market – it's up to you to provide the software"
Sony's David Reeves drums up support for the PSP



"Every free game is taking away hours that could be spent playing games [people] actually paid for – imagine that!"
Nintendo's David Gosen on console bundles

"How can we make it more cost efficient to get the fun and not have to spend all our money on the plumbing?"
Moore sneaks a subtle Mario dig into his XNA presentation

"As a businessman, I don't relish the role of defending our business from charges of gratuitous violence"
Gosen again, this time ignoring the many failed lawsuits against *GTA* and the like



NOT ANOTHER…

HALF-LIFE 2 STORY

ARRESTS MADE IN THE SOURCE-CODE THEFT CASE

Progress has finally been made towards solving the incident that further delayed one of the most important games of this generation – *Half-Life 2*. The FBI arrested people in several countries at the beginning of June in connection with the theft of the title's source code last October. It's believed that the FBI followed a trail of clues provided by gamers around the world. "Within a few days of the announcement of the break-in, the online gaming community had tracked down those involved," explained Gabe Newell, CEO of *Half-Life 2* developer Valve. "It was extraordinary to watch how quickly and how cleverly gamers were able to unravel what are traditionally unsolvable problems for law enforcement related to this kind of cyber-crime."

The past few months have seen Valve working with local and national authorities to prepare cases against those who have now been arrested (in unspecified numbers, you'll notice), but it shouldn't be too long before the case is laid to rest. We hope…

As Newell said, for a long time this kind of web-based illegality would have been impossible to trace – it's almost unthinkable that the theft itself could have been traceable but the subsequent leak would have been a beacon, alerting authorities to the underground antics.

Of course, you have to wonder if the public would have rallied so strongly behind a lesser title or developer – call us cynical but we can't see a leak of something like *The Suffering* uniting nations in the way this has. Either way, Newell is grateful for everyone's help. "It was very uplifting to see how the community rallied and tracked these people down," he said. "Everyone here at Valve is once again reminded of how much we owe to the gaming community."



Data stream

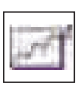
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



OUT WITH THE ODD

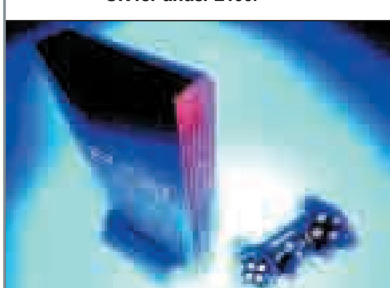
Atari has split with Oddworld Inhabitants, developer of Abe and Munch's titles on PSone, GBC and Xbox. This decision hands Atari's 50 per cent share in the company over to Microsoft in exchange for a cut of the publishing royalties, giving the American giant a commanding share of the talented team. Things have been quiet at Oddworld since *Munch* launched with the Xbox, so hopefully things will be hurried along by this move. This comes as news emerges that EA has picked up Oddworld title *Stranger* (title TBC) for release later next year.





CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Since the PS2 dropped to $149 a few weeks ago, sales have shot up around 140 per cent overall and a staggering 216 per cent in the first week after the cut. "This price drop came when we felt it was strategically the best timing to expand the market, and it's gratifying to see consumers respond so aggressively to our commitment to meet their growing expectations," said SCEA's Jack Tretton. But with waves of decent titles on the horizon, we reckon it'll be 2005 before you can bag a PS2 in the UK for under £100.



MARKET ANALYSTS PREDICT A PRE-OWNED EXPLOSION AT RETAIL

TRICKS OF THE TRADE-IN

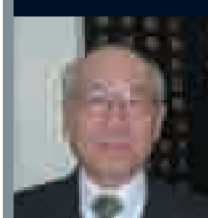
In a speech given at the ELSPA Summit in London, market analyst Nick Parker revealed a worrying retail trend that is leaving publishers out of pocket. As stores build their pre-owned games sections publishers and developers fail to see a penny after the first sale of the game. With the spiralling costs of development and an increasingly large second-hand market, making a profit is becoming harder for the brains behind the games.

The main reason behind such huge promotion of pre-owned schemes in stores is that the mark-up on used software is often greater than that on new games, hence many stores moving second-hand titles from back shelves to more prominent locations. This has been seen as a case of shops biting the hand that feeds them, with retailers gaining extra profit from the very products that allow them to exist in the first place.

Parallels have been drawn with other media retailers, and while comparisons with the likes of HMV and Borders (neither of which offer second-hand products) may be wide of the mark, it is odd that videogames are one of the few products that are widely sold in second-hand form. But if the rumblings are true, the worst is yet to come…

The bleakest predictions would see publishers attempting to control the resale of second-hand games via legal means, as has been the case in Japan – there are reports of several such cases but none have yet been successful. Kazuya Watanabe, executive managing director of CESA (the Japanese equivalent of ELSPA), told GameSpy back in April that Japanese courts decided three or four years ago that "once [a] game is sold, the manufacturer no longer retains rights to the media". "Despite the fact that the court has passed judgment, the software manufacturers are still not satisfied with the outcome because of the high percentage of used sales in overall Japanese game sales," Watanabe-san explained.

The legal wrangling continues in Japan, but if Parker's predictions about the state of the UK market are correct, we could soon see similar cases over here.



■ Watanabe-san – still dealing with angry publishers.



■ Any second-hand profits go straight to the retailer.

THE LONG-RUNNING DOOM MOVIE SAGA CONTINUES

DUDE, WHERE'S MY CHAINSAW?

The silver-screen adaptation of id's seminal shooter *Doom* has once again hit a rocky patch. This time, id has executed a clause in its contract to take the licence away from Warner Bros after the project was inactive for 15 months. It is thought that the developer is keen to get the film out to coincide with the forthcoming release of *Doom 3* – a formidable task indeed, so it's no surprise that talks are already underway with several other studios. It's reported that Warner Bros even had a completed script ready to go, but now signs point towards a possible deal with Universal for what needs to be a film that does the game's legacy justice.

Despite a history of horrible transitions – Bob Hoskins' incredible portrayal of the world's favourite plumber springs to mind – 2004 seems to be the year for snapping up game licences to turn into movies. *The Getaway*, *Dead Or Alive*, *Metroid* and even *Pac-Man* are all among the titles that will hit the big screen over the next few years as this worrying trend continues. Multimedia games seem to be a popular direction at the moment as well; rather than optioning a game licence to turn into a movie or vice versa, IPs like *.hack* and *Tak And The Power Of Juju* have been produced simultaneously to give consumers the ultimate package.



No big-name stars on board yet. Funnily enough.



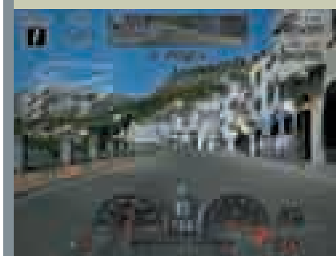
gamesTM THE TOP FIVE

GAMES THAT MAKE YOU GO 'BAAAAA'



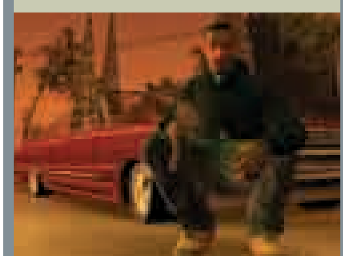
No.5 THE SIMS 2

Hey, if pointless add-ons can sell loads…



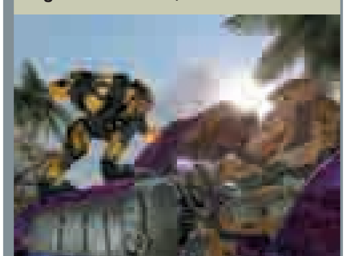
No.4 GRAN TURISMO 4

It won't even have to be good to do well



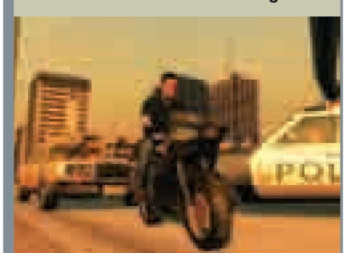
No.3 GTA: SAN ANDREAS

A guaranteed seller, no matter what



No.2 HALO 2

Xbox zealots unite behind Bungie



No.1 DRIV3R

You don't have to keep it, you know…



ATARI CEO LAYS INTO SONY'S PSP STRATEGY

FRANK BRUNO



In a somewhat bizarre move, Atari's CEO, Bruno Bonnell, has struck out at Sony for what he claims is its failure to deliver vital information to potential PSP developers and publishers. Speaking at the Piper Jaffray Consumer Conference in New York in June, Bonnell spoke of the vague nature of Sony's plans, or at least its reluctance to share information. "Development costs? From one cent to $50 million – I have no idea," he told the assembly. "What about the movie strategy? The wireless strategy? The MP3 downloading? We don't know. What about the connectivity issues? We don't know. What about the video output? We don't know."

This is a strange outburst. Sony has been quite forthcoming in dishing out development kits and emulation for the unit (except to THQ, it seems, who, according to CEO Brian Farrell, have yet to see anything of the sort), but it appears that further information and detailed strategies have been much harder to come by. As well as concerns over costs, the machine's pricing is also causing a stir. Most analysts have predicted figures from $199 to $349 but Bonnell is convinced that it'll set you back even more, telling conference-goers "$500 to start would be my guess."

But with the fanboys already queuing around the block to get their hands on the PlayStation Portable on day one, ignoring the handheld is far from a shrewd business decision. EA has already guaranteed several titles for launch, and whatever the risks this is not an area to be avoided, especially if Sony's vision of the machine becoming as chic as an iPod and as ubiquitous as the Walkman becomes a reality. Which it most probably will.

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



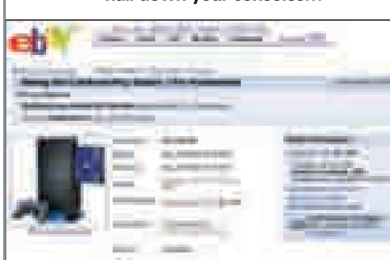
DINI IS SERVED

Footy-game legend Dino Dini – the man behind *Player Manager* and *Kick Off* – is developing a new football title at DC-Studios. "The current generation of football games have no focus on the player," says Dini. "The game itself is the spectacle. This is a problem. It is the player's experience that is the key to creating a game which is accessible, playable and has long-term appeal to players." Sounds fair enough, but one thing's for sure – he'll be given a run for his money by *Pro Evo 4* and *FIFA 2005*, both of which are due out in October.



STRAIGHT TO BID WITH NO SUPPER

A recent eBay auction broke new ground as a furious mother hit her son in the best way she knew how – by selling his "beloved" PlayStation2. The listing was a joy to read, detailing the sorry tale in which the child broke a bugle, raided the fridge for beer and knocked back a $120 bottle of bubbly. Oops. Suffice to say that mummy returned the favour, her listing including such choice cuts as "Plays great! Ask my son!" in a bid (no pun intended) to earn back the $177 worth of wreckage caused by junior. The lesson here? Either be very good, boys and girls, or nail down your consoles…

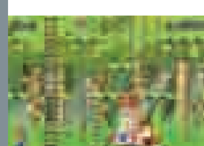




NINTENDO PUSHES GAME BOY ADVANCE FURTHER THAN EVER

ALL GO FOR THE GBA



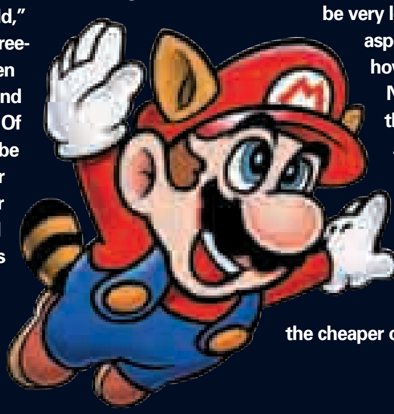


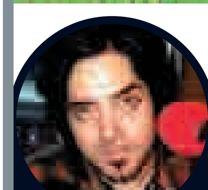
Along with the PlayStation, Nintendo's Game Boy is one of the most well-known brands in videogame history, and the company is ensuring that it stays that way. With both the original Game Boy Advance and SP models still selling phenomenally well around the world, Nintendo is now planning a follow-up to the machine – independent of development on the DS.

While this has been expected for some time, Nintendo Europe managing director David Gosen used the recent ELSPA Summit to come clean about the new machine. "New Game Boy iterations are under review right now, before the DS is sold," Gosen said. Nine new three-letter acronyms have been registered by Nintendo and range from DGB to GBY. Of course, these could well be for the DS, but it's further proof that Nintendo is far from willing to stand still in the run-up to the PSP's ever-nearing launch.

On a similar note, the company is now hoping to release the Game Boy Advance into the Chinese gaming market after the successful launch of the iQue. The launch of the GBA will be handled by Nintendo's Chinese subsidiary (also called iQue) and the unit will sell for 698 yuan (around £46) – a bargain, especially when you consider that it will come with a free copy of *Made In Wario* (or *WarioWare Inc: Mega Microgame$*, as it's known outside Asia).

It's not been revealed how much Nintendo will be charging for games, or even what those titles will be, but with piracy rampant in China we're willing to bet that prices will be very low. The most telling aspect of the launch, however, is the fact that Nintendo is releasing the uglier Game Boy Advance rather than the SP. However, when you consider the machine's launch price, it's unsurprising that the company went with the cheaper option.

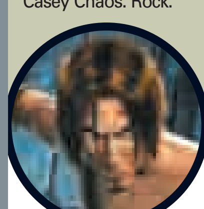




SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

With spare time until his next adventure, it looks like the Prince of Persia has found himself a new job – pretending to be Amen frontman Casey Chaos. Rock.

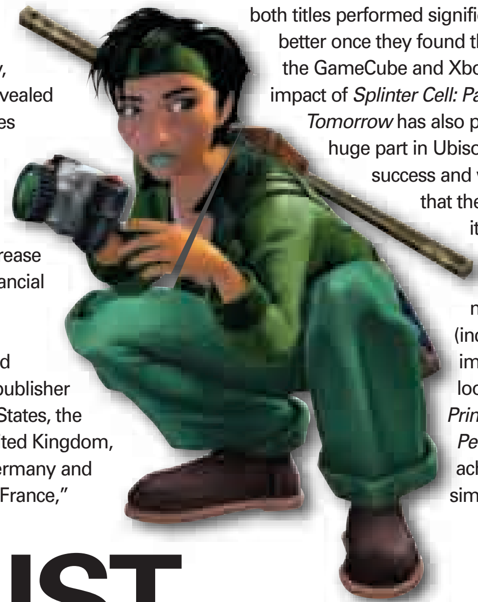


MASSIVE RISE IN SALES PUTS UBISOFT ON COURSE FOR A GOOD YEAR

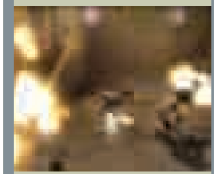
ON THE UP

French publisher Ubisoft has announced impressive sales figures that will no doubt boost the company's spirits after the initially disappointing retail performances of *Beyond Good & Evil, Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* and *XIII*.

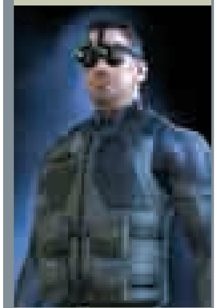
With the '03-'04 financial year out of the way, Ubisoft has revealed that it saw sales rise by 22.5 per cent and is expecting to see a significant increase in the next financial year. "We are currently the seventh ranked independent publisher in the United States, the fifth in the United Kingdom, the third in Germany and the second in France," said the softco's president and CEO, Yves Guillemot. "Our objective is now to rank among the top five in the US and to become the leader in Europe during the next three years."



Although we were incensed by poor sales of *Prince Of Persia* and *Beyond Good & Evil* over Christmas, both titles performed significantly better once they found their way to the GameCube and Xbox. The impact of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* has also played a huge part in Ubisoft's recent success and we're sure that the titles it has planned for the next year (including the impressive-looking *Prince Of Persia 2*) will achieve similar results.



A multiformat outing helped revive the Prince.



Sam Fisher's stealth tactics have been a boost.

JUST SAY NO

NINTENDO HAS ENOUGH MATES, THANK YOU

Nintendo president Satoru Iwata has quashed rumours in the Japanese press that the company is seeking to buy new development ideas and other publishers.

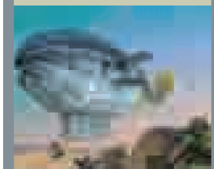
Speaking to French newspaper *Les Echos*, Iwata-san revealed that "the company's focus is on building strong relationships with external developers and working closely with them, rather than acquiring them outright." Nintendo has long been linked with a possible buy-out of Bandai, but these revelations by Iwata-san imply that this isn't the case. Several partnerships have turned sour over the last few years (Rare, Leftfield and Silicon Knights, among others, have parted company with Nintendo) and it's quite possible that the company wishes to avoid similar departures in the future.

You only have to look at the recent deal with Kuju to realise that Nintendo fully intends to fulfil its new approach to business partnerships, and with any luck this close working relationship will yield positive results for one of the Game Boy's biggest franchises, *Advance Wars*.

Of course, this could all be a smokescreen – after all, Sammy said on numerous occasions that it had no intention of buying SEGA and look what happened there – but the only person who really knows what's going on is Iwata-san, and his lips are sealed.



Iwata-san wants quality not quantity, obviously.



Nintendo's partner Kuju is 'doing' more *Advance Wars*.

GAMES ROOM 101

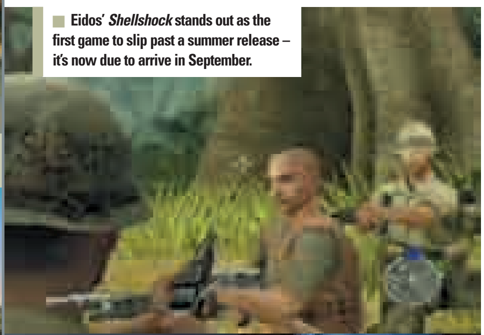
THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING



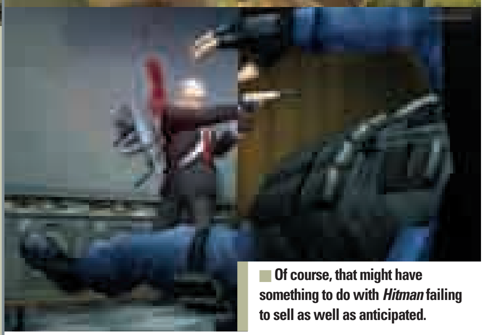
NO. 21: THE SUMMER SHUNT

It's official – games don't sell in the summer. But before you start shouting about how that's probably because publishers don't release any good titles from June to August, that's not necessarily true. Take *Hitman: Contracts*, for example – a decent instalment in a quality series from a proven developer. All the makings of a huge seller, yes? Well, no. A few months after its release and Eidos has warned its shareholders of a possible loss in profits, all because *Contracts* sold only half what was anticipated. The reason? According to the analysts, everyone's too busy enjoying the sun to play games.

The sad thing is, they could be right… to a degree, at least. While many of us would happily argue that we want to play games all year round, you have to understand that we (as more dedicated gamers) are starting to make up a smaller proportion of the market. Hence games such as *Hitman* – despite being highly rated across the board – are classed as a failure by many simply because the majority of gamers didn't buy them. As a result, more games get shunted towards the end of the year, meaning there's even more clutter come Christmas time. A vicious circle? Oh, you'd better believe it…



Eidos' *Shellshock* stands out as the first game to slip past a summer release – it's now due to arrive in September.



Of course, that might have something to do with *Hitman* failing to sell as well as anticipated.

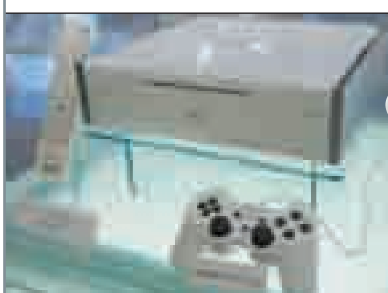
Data stream

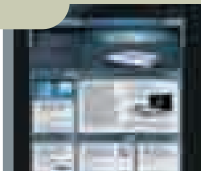
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



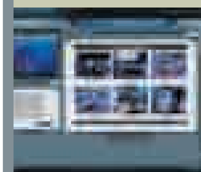
BETTER THAN PSX

After halting production of multimedia powerhouse the PSX, Sony has reintroduced the console in Japan at a slightly lower price and with all the promised functionality reinstated. Most of the updates lie inside the shiny box, allowing extra features from the DVD burner such as separating movies into chapters, designing menu screens and enhanced dubbing capabilities. There are also fixes for several internal bugs as well as further browser support within Sony's online service. It is thought that this newer version is the model that will be brought over to PAL territories when we finally get them, although a European release date and price have yet to be confirmed.





The Phantom website is slowly revealing secrets.



The machine appeared at E3, with moderate success.



THE PHANTOM MENACE

'VAPOURWARE' CONSOLE DUE FOR 2005 EUROPE LAUNCH

From the worst kind of vapourware to an imminent reality – the development path of Infinium Labs' Phantom console has had more ups and downs than a day at Alton Towers. With a release date in the US set for the end of the year, though, it looks like Infinium executives have turned their attention towards Europe with an aim to release the machine over here… if it proves to be popular with American users, that is.

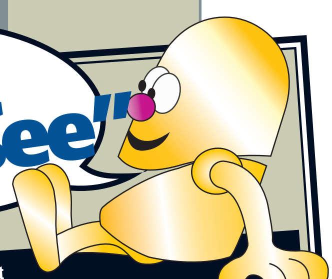
According to Infinium COO Kevin Bacchus the company intends to bring the Phantom to the UK and Europe early in 2005, provided that the US launch on 18 November goes as planned. "We will have a modest launch and will use the US as a test bed," said Bacchus at the recent ELSPA Summit, adding that both the console and peripherals will be sold in stores so as not to shut out retailers completely (software for the machine will only be available via downloads).

Despite having shown much scepticism in the past, we have to admit that the prospect of a device such as the Phantom doesn't sound all that bad and we'll be interested to see how the US market receives it. However, we're still unsure whether it will stand a chance in the UK – that Infinium still has yet to confirm the launch line-up of software, not to mention the fact that the hardware will be sorely dated by the time it gets here, is certainly more than enough cause for concern.



You'll get one of these custom keyboard/mousemat thingies. Which is, um, nice?

"say what you see"



Meaningless waffle from the industry

THIS MONTH Atari's Bruno Bonnell has a dig at Sony for being too secretive about the PSP:



"What about the movie strategy? The wireless strategy? The MP3 downloading? We don't know. And what if it breaks? Can you get another one for free?"

gamesTM says: So many questions, virtually no answers. That Sony's not telling publishers the whole story is worrying, particularly as the PSP's due out in six months. Still, at least he didn't ask about battery life…

MORE FROM MR CHIPS NEXT MONTH!

ARE YOU GAME?

GET YOUR HANDS ON FREE GAME STARS LIVE TICKETS



With less than two months to go until Game Stars Live at ExCeL in London's Docklands, things are really kicking into gear for the new ITV-backed event. Running from 1-5 September and boasting a show floor the size of three football pitches, big-name publishers such as Atari, Eidos, Electronic Arts and even Nintendo will be showing off their latest wares. What's more, there'll be all kinds of gadgets, games and new technology for visitors to try, as well as live broadcasts on the main stage from ITV and Capital FM with plenty of events going on throughout the five days of the show.

Tickets are already on sale, but if you haven't snapped yours up then you might be interested in our special offer. Thanks to Barrington Harvey (promoter of Game Stars Live), we've got a hundred pairs of tickets, worth £30 each, to give away – and you don't even have to answer a question to get them. All you need to do is call 0905 168 0659, and leave your name, address and contact number. The first hundred people to call will receive a free pair of tickets for what promises to be the biggest UK gaming event of the year. We're too good to you…

(Calls cost 50p per minute, charges from mobiles may vary.)

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

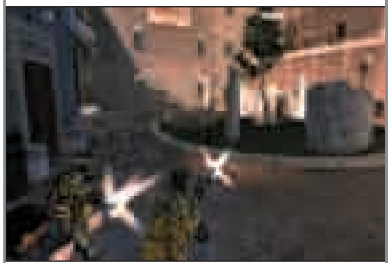
HEAR ME ROAR

Guildford-based Lionhead Studios has made what looks set to be a brilliant year even more so – by recruiting Ron and Chris Millar, the men involved with such titles as *StarCraft*, *Diablo* and *WarCraft*. "Ron and Chris have so much experience in games development and design that we felt that they would be an exciting and valuable addition to Lionhead," said studio boss Peter Molyneux. "The games they have worked on speak for themselves and I am very much looking forward to working with them both." This bodes well for what could be Lionhead's biggest year to date with *Fable* and *Black & White 2* both looming.



GIVE US A WAVE

After several months of waiting, the first games to support the new features offered by the Xbox Live Tsunami update are almost upon us. *Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow* will be one of the first to offer subscribers the new functionality, setting the trend for the big (well, bigger) guns such as *Halo 2* later in the year. Clans, MSN integration, in-game alerts when a friend is online or a game request is made, and publicity for new products and content will all roll out in due course.



Mobile game of the month

CRASH NITRO KART



He may no longer be Sony's leading mascot but Crash is certainly making himself heard on Nokia's N-Gage. Like the similar GBA version, *Crash Nitro Kart* sees you racing against the likes of Dr Cortex and Tiny and offers plenty of high-speed thrills and spills. Visuals are extremely polished, and despite the screen ratio you'll soon be tearing through the well-detailed tracks like a seasoned pro. A nice selection of power-ups, some great track design and plenty of playable characters ensure that this is a decent purchase if you're a proud N-Gage owner.





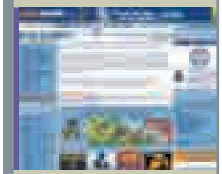
STRICTLY ON THE QD

NOKIA'S N-GAGE RE-LAUNCH SUFFERS A SETBACK

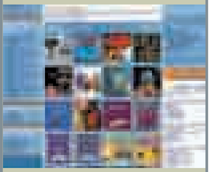
It's not often that we're lucky enough to get something before our American cousins, but that will be the case with the N-Gage QD – although widely available in Europe and Asia, Nokia's update won't go on sale in the States until the end of July. "While the product is ready for shipment, we have made a business decision to maximise the impact of the launch by synchronising across all channel partners," explained Nokia's head of American PR, Steven Knuff. This could well be a wise move on Nokia's part.

Despite receiving plenty of positive feedback about the updated machine, the original N-Gage suffered several setbacks when released in the US. Within weeks of its launch, the machine was already getting heavily discounted and several large stores even started to downsize shelf space for the phone-cum-console.

Furthermore, Nokia's head of strategy, Matti Alahuhta, has said that 40 titles will be available for the N-Gage by Christmas – significantly fewer than the 50-100 games that were predicted to arrive by the end of the year. Still, the new design may help shift a few handsets. Perhaps.



A million games? That's a lot of very sore thumbs.



The site hopes to become the market leader.

GAME MOBILE'S MAGIC MILLION

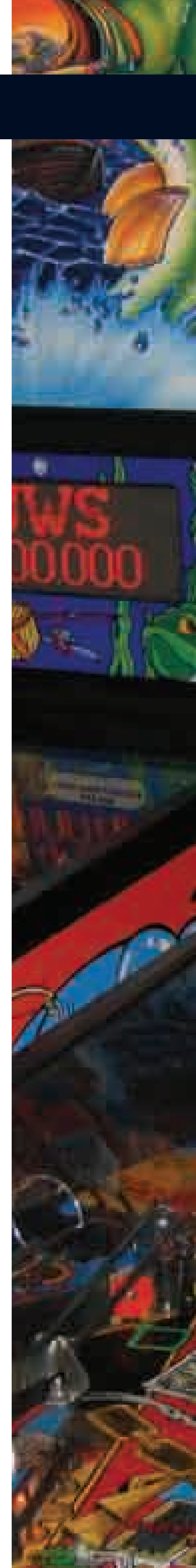
MOBILE-PHONE GAME PROVIDER CELEBRATES SALES OF ONE MILLION

Phone-gaming website gamemobile.co.uk has revealed that it has sold over a million games since its launch 14 months ago. This is further proof of the rapid growth of the mobile market, and industry experts and operators alike are predicting that this is only the start of a rapidly expanding userbase; news that is certainly set to please Game Mobile.

"Our policy from day one has been to aggregate all of the best mobile games onto one portal and keep the price low so we attract customers back again and again," said Richard Hawley, marketing director of Game Mobile. "We're proud to have sold so many games."

Growth patterns predict that sales will rise to two million in the next six months, and a recent partnership with two of the world's leading mobile games developers is bound to help Game Mobile achieve its impressive target. In order to ensure it stays on top of its game, future enhancements will include loyalty points and mobile gambling. Let's just hope that everyone's parents approve…

"THE PSP IS AWESOME AND I WANT ONE RIGHT NOW. IF WE COULD HAVE STOLEN ONE AT E3, WE WOULD HAVE. THAT SCREEN IS AMAZING"
ALEX WARD, CRITERION



ALEX WARD

CRITERION

The adage that even the mightiest oak grows from the smallest acorn often rings true. "I started off making the tea and giving out cheats for *Mortal Kombat II*," recounts Alex Ward of his days at Acclaim. Now director of design at Criterion and lead developer on what looks set to be the year's hottest racer, Ward put in five years' hard graft at Acclaim in the late Nineties – a time that turned out to be a big transitional period in gaming. "I saw the rise of the PlayStation and the N64," he says – a busy time for Acclaim, during which it released some of its best titles (*Turok* and *NBA Jam: TE*, among others). "It was bloody exciting."

Ward's move to Criterion in 1999 came at the perfect time – the Guildford-based firm was just starting work with something called the PlayStation2, not to mention RenderWare. The RenderWare engine that powered its early titles such as *Airblade* and the original *Burnout* has now become an industry standard, providing the backbone for a quarter of all games in development. "Re-inventing the wheel is pretty pointless," Ward explains. "There have been some costly and spectacular failures by teams who screwed around with technology for too long at the expense of making a decent game." But despite lazy implementation occasionally sullying the good name of RenderWare, those who know how to use it are still pushing the boundaries. "When we completed development work on *Burnout 2*, the graphics team thought that they were about 90 per cent done with the hardware," says Ward, but apparently there was still plenty of hidden power in Sony's console. "Upon closer inspection and tuning, they figured that the number was more likely closer to 65 per cent."

Aside from futuristic trickster *Airblade* and the upcoming *Black*, Criterion's portfolio is as nitrous-fuelled as they come. We're all for developer specialisation but would Criterion ever branch out into other genres and even licensed products? "Absolutely, if it was something we really wanted to do," says Ward. "People ring up and ask us to do stuff that is so diverse sometimes that it's almost laughable. I won't name names, but would you ring up the *Burnout* team and ask them if they would like to make a game based on *EastEnders*?" It's a fictional example, but newly forged ties with licensing king Electronic Arts put the firm in a strong situation should a big opportunity present itself. "EA is super-focused on making games. That sounds like a really stupid thing to say but believe me, you'd be surprised at how many firms out there just don't play any of the games they publish."

And let's not forget that Criterion and EA are mere weeks away from taking the plunge into network gaming. "I think mass online penetration will take a lot longer that some people think," Ward says. "It can still be a pretty daunting experience. Getting shot in the head by the AI is much less painful than getting shot – repeatedly – by some online maniac speaking in some weird hardcore language through your headset. I think the best online experiences through services like Xbox Live are the private, more closed games where you just play with friends." Still, despite creating what will probably become the best online game for the PS2, Ward remains modest. "Bringing *Burnout* online smoothly and quickly is no mean feat and EA's infrastructure and existing online experience has really helped us."

But what will the future hold for Alex Ward and his team of adrenaline junkies? "We are *very* excited about the PSP, less so right now about the DS. We'll definitely release some handheld software in the next year or so," he says, but while others see the new wave of handhelds as the beginning of the end for 2D, Ward has a different view. "Thank God the power is finally here. I bought a Game Boy years ago and I've waited a long time for something to replace it. I was disappointed by GBA, and mobile phone games? Forget it."

The firm is keeping quiet about new IP *Black*, but for racing fans Ward envisions a very connected future. "I think we're just dipping our toes in the water with regard to the online experiences we could have." But if that makes *Burnout 3* a playful paddle, we're not sure we could even handle a splash in the shallow end…

Burnout 3: Takedown is in development, and is previewed on page 42.



WE'VE NEVER FOUND A COMPANY THAT LIKES SMASHING UP CARS AS MUCH AS CRITERION. BUT WE'VE YET TO FIND ANYONE QUITE SO GOOD AT IT EITHER. AS BURNOUT 3 SPEEDS NEARER, WE SAT DOWN WITH ONE OF THE MEN BEHIND THE MAYHEM TO SEE JUST WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS


TIME
0'03"466
LAP
1/3
MARIO
BOWSER
TOAD
DONKEY
PEACH
WARIO
LUIGI

DOUBLE OR

THE LOWDOWN

WITH THE HANDHELD MARKET SOON TO BE A BATTLEFIELD, NINTENDO'S CREATION OF A NEW FORMAT IS A BRAVE MOVE. BUT WILL IT PAY OFF, OR PROVE TO BE THE FINAL NAIL IN THE COFFIN?

Typical conference whooping and hollering aside, Nintendo's unveiling of its new handheld, the DS (Developer System, according to official sources), has been received with surprising scepticism. We say surprising, because even those who can be accused of being rampant fanboys have been rather quiet about the whole thing. Normally by now, Nintendophiles would be busy climbing the walls with anticipation, but apart from a handful of the hardcore pledging their interest, things have remained relatively muted.

Admittedly, the somewhat alternative approach to the future of gaming taken by the DS may have stunned the majority of today's gamers, particularly when compared to Sony's PSP that pleased the crowd by promoting itself on raw power and visual prowess. Nevertheless, the hushed response is unlikely to be what Nintendo wanted.

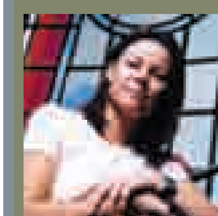
That the company has so far declined to offer specifications for the DS may have something to do with the silence, as it's likely to be seen as an act of cowardice by more cynical members of the industry, particularly those aligned with either of Nintendo's rivals. However, we'd rather suggest that such a decision is an example of the company's determination to break away from the fascination that many within the industry have with technical improvement – the idea that having a faster processor speed or more memory should in some way make a machine 'better' than another.

Certainly, while the outburst from Nintendo Europe's MD, David Gosen, at the recent ELSPA Summit might be uncharacteristic of the man, it's testament to Nintendo's apparent frustration with the state of the games industry in general – one Nintendo spokesman told us that "if you're talking specs, you're missing the point of DS. It's about new ways of gaming and not just incremental improvement of what existed for years." With high production costs and obsessions with the best graphics and physics rife, the belief is that many seem to have forgotten about the one reason why people enjoy games in the first place – good old-fashioned gameplay.

Not surprisingly, then, it's on this high ground that Nintendo is firmly making its stand – the same high ground, interestingly enough, where the company pitched its camp during the days of the NES and SNES, when it was making a concerted effort to bring videogames to a wider audience. By offering unique functionality (for a handheld console, anyway) that will allow developers to create new and exciting gameplay concepts, Nintendo's insistence that the DS will introduce gamers to a new realm of gaming is infectious in the very least. Of course, the big question is whether companies such as Sony and Microsoft (both of whom have proved that heavy-handed marketing and pretty graphics are more than enough to win over the masses) will feel threatened by such a stance. And then there's the worry of whether Nintendo will win over anyone other than those already 'in the know' as far as the quality of its games goes.

QUITS

"NINTENDO'S INSISTENCE THAT GAMEPLAY, NOT TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION, IS THE IMPORTANT ISSUE IS REFRESHING… BUT WILL GAMERS LISTEN?"



"WE HAVE THE SUPPORT OF OVER A HUNDRED GAME DEVELOPERS AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THEY WILL DEVELOP SOME TRULY INNOVATIVE GAMES"

SHELLY PEARCE, NINTENDO EUROPE

TRIED & TESTED

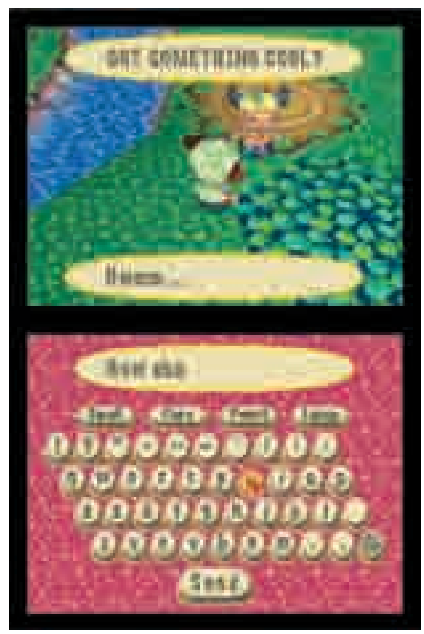
IT'S ABOUT THE GAMES

It should come as no surprise that the majority of the first batch of DS software titles to be announced will be familiar to most gamers. Hopefully, what Nintendo has shown so far will provide the strong foundation for a launch that impresses as many gamers as it deserves to…

GAME ONE

Animal Crossing DS

Without a doubt, the game that has us sold on the DS on a matter of principle. Having lost nearly two years to the GameCube version, the promise of wireless visits to other people's villages, not to mention ease of use with letters, inventories and the like (subtle tweaks of the already existing gameplay, using the DS's functionality and so on) has us more excited about a game than we've been in a long time.



This is definitely the game that will make the DS worth buying – particularly as it will mean more virtual life and less work…



TRIED & TESTED

GAME TWO

Mario Kart DS

Perhaps one of the less inspired uses for the second screen – a track map, no less – but still rather impressive thanks to its solid re-creation of *Mario Kart* in 3D. Plumping for single Karts over the GameCube's twin units, Nintendo's demonstration seems to offer everything that you could want from a *Mario Kart* game, although the lack of a hands-on test opportunity only leaves us wanting to know more.





TRADITIONAL, IF SLIGHTLY LACKING IN INNOVATION

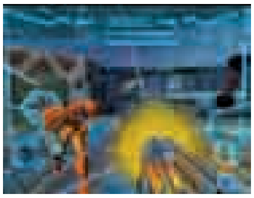
"NINTENDO HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE INNOVATION AND THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE KEY FOCUS OF THE COMPANY"

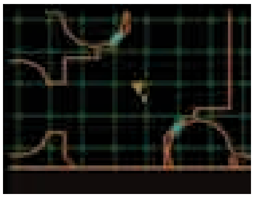
SHELLY PEARCE, NINTENDO EUROPE

GAME THREE

Metroid Prime: Hunters

Initial impressions of the DS's representation of *Metroid* are easily formed – it's *Prime* on a handheld. Go hands on, however, and the experience is different; the method of using the stylus to turn, aim and fire takes some getting used to and could prove too fiddly for less patient gamers. With the focus so far being on multiplayer, we're already hoping there's a meaty single-player adventure to back it up.





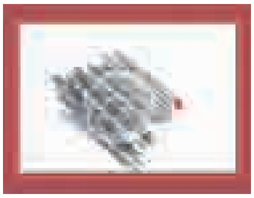
COULD PROVE TOO FIDDLY FOR SOME GAMERS

GAME FOUR

Wario Ware Inc DS

If ever a game was ideally suited to the transition from single-screen to DS, it'd be this. Although the dual-screen format is used cosmetically, it's through the stylus that the gameplay really changes – slicing through objects, dragging coins, furiously creating wax rubbings and more besides. We only hope that Nintendo can come up with enough games using this new input method to rival the GBA version.





GUARANTEED TO BE A WINNER, WITHOUT QUESTION

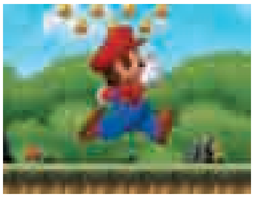
"ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE GAMES ANNOUNCED SHOW PROMISE, IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THEY'LL BE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE DS A SUCCESS"

GAME FIVE

New Super Mario Bros

Mario's latest adventure shuns the third dimension for a 2.5D approach that'll please retro fans, but the big difference is in the visuals – everything is drawn with N64-style graphics to give the world more depth. However, that the game only uses a single screen seems a little strange, particularly considering Nintendo's determination to emphasise the unique strengths of the DS.





PRETTY, BUT WHY ONLY SINGLE-SCREEN?

THREE STEPS TO HEAVEN

The key reasons why Nintendo feels the DS is the handheld of the future…



Bringing back memories of various Nintendo Game & Watch titles (particularly *Donkey Kong, Mario Bros* and *Zelda*), the use of twin screens should offer a wealth of options for new gameplay, so long as developers don't pass on the opportunity.



The addition of a stylus-enabled touch screen isn't that revolutionary in terms of technology – PDAs have used them for some time – but it's Nintendo's focus on how the function will allow gameplay to evolve that's really interesting.



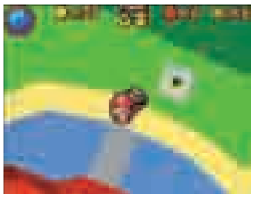
Making use of a more advanced version of Nintendo's own proprietary WaveBird technology (combined with IEEE 802.11 protocols), the DS's wireless functionality allows up to 16 people to access a local wireless network of at least 30 feet.

GAME SIX

Super Mario 64x4

Less the handheld port of the N64 game that many believed it to be and more an arena-based challenge where multiple players race to grab Stars from around each of the familiar maps. As yet, Nintendo hasn't confirmed whether that will be the sole aim of the game, so hopes are still high for a complete single-player adventure as well, rather than just the chance to play against AI opponents.





MORE THAN JUST THE USUAL MARIO GAME

GAME SEVEN

Pictochat

Nintendo's portable handheld answer to MSN Messenger… as long as you're in range of the person you're chatting to, of course. Allowing up to 16 people to type, scrawl or even draw messages to each other in real-time, PictoChat will no doubt prove popular with the younger generation of DS owners – as well as prompting teachers to ban the handheld from classrooms.



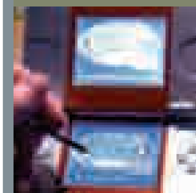


LOOKING TO BE ONE SPECIFICALLY FOR 'THE KIDS'

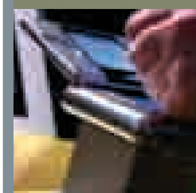
GAMES TO COME

And There's More…

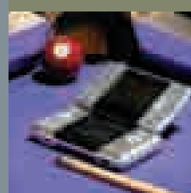
Not surprisingly, the games shown above only account for a small percentage of what is actually due to appear come the launch of the handheld – several other publishers besides Nintendo have titles in the works, despite not having shown anything much of them at time of going to press. Some are pretty much as you'd expect them to be just from hearing what they are; Konami's *Yu-Gi-Oh!* title (subtitled *Nightmare Troubadour*) improves visually, using the dual screens to show the action from different perspectives, while Hudson's *Bomberman* update does little to change what is already a proven style of gameplay. Others, like Namco's *Pac-Pix* – which, on reflection, can't really be considered a 'proper' game – and SEGA's Sonic title make use of the touch-screen technology in an innovative way by having you draw on or rub the screen respectively, although exactly how the gameplay will stand up when put into the context of a full-priced game remains to be seen.



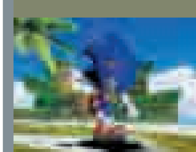
The touch screen is actually rather robust.



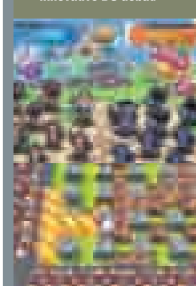
The top screen is slimline but doesn't feel flimsy.



Yes, so it's a lot nicer than we thought. Hurrah.



Sonic will make an innovative DS debut.



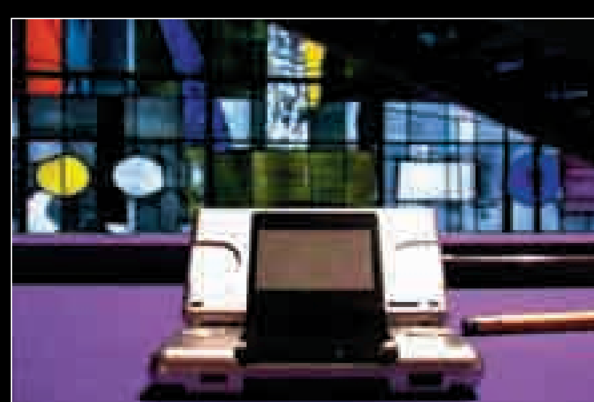
WE'VE SPENT AN ENTIRE AFTERNOON WITH THE DS – ARE WE CONVINCED? WELL…

THE STORY SO FAR…



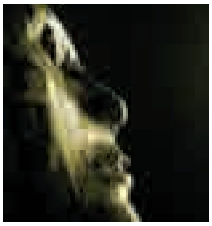
While we admit that our initial reaction was one of slight concern (particularly over the fact that the DS just didn't look like a Nintendo design), we've warmed to the new handheld. The early images, which made it look incredibly plastic, fail to do it justice in terms of size and build quality – not only is it only marginally wider and no thicker than a GBA SP, but it feels a lot more rugged than we initally thought. The same goes for the touch screen and stylus which, while obviously open to abuse by careless hands, appear to be able to stand up to some fairly heavy use (although if too many games along the lines of *Wario Ware*'s frantic brass-rubbing task appear, we may change our minds). According to a representative, the current design is 'about 90 per cent' complete, with only some minor modifications – such as the placement of Nintendo branding and the addition of a holder for the stylus above the DS card slot – needing to be made.

Right now, though, our biggest concern lies with how developers – specifically those not working under the Nintendo umbrella – will use the opportunity being handed to them on a silver touch-screen platter. It goes without saying that Nintendo is likely to take the most advantage of the dual- and touch-screen functionality, but we're worried that third-party developers may feel less inclined to make the effort, with simple uses that prove inconsequential to the gameplay (as demonstrated by *Mario Kart*'s track map) swiftly becoming the norm. Such an approach is likely to be the death knell for the handheld before it even has a chance to thrive, so we can only hope that big-name publishers see past the safe route and actually do something innovative. If Nintendo's tech demonstrations are any sign, there's plenty of potential there – it's just a matter using it.



games™ USA REPORT

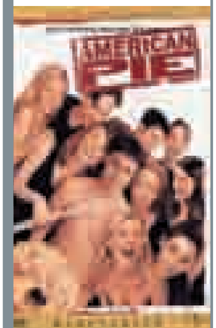




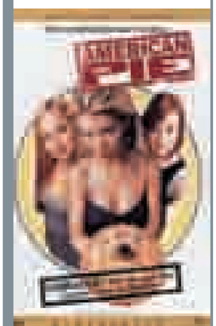
LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"NETWORK TV IN THE STATES IS SUFFOCATED BY THE PRUDISH IDEALS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN MIDDLE AGE AND ABOVE, ALL OF WHOM DEMAND



■ *American Pie* with extra smut. If you really like that sort of thing.



Extremes of freedom and suppression dominate your daily entertainment world here in the United States. Network TV – what they call free-to-air TV – is absolutely suffocated by the prudish ideals of God-fearing, oatmeal-munching church-goers; men and women in middle age and above, all of whom wear their slacks much too high and demand that nothing exciting ever happen.

A typical evening movie has more words chopped out of it than a Beijing newscast. Anything that uses casual, realistic language as its base is rendered unwatchable. Sometimes they play *The Big Lebowski*. It is almost entirely dubbed. Adam Sandler was bleeped for using the word 'weed' at the newly sanitised MTV Movie Awards, which are no longer shown live. Many shows bleep the word 'ass' and routinely remove the 'God' from 'God damn'.

And that's just sonically; visuals are destroyed even more blatantly. Programmers will use *Cops*-style blur blobs right in the middle of your movie, or even, on occasion, a floating black rectangle, to hide from your eyes things far more natural than the crimes that form the bulk of acceptable television each day. In *Apocalypse Now*, when Willard lies in Madame Roxanne Sarrault's poster bed while she strips, in silhouette only, behind a thick mosquito net, she is digitally altered to have a perfectly straight outline from shoulder to waist when turning to the side, lest you latch onto some notion of female anatomy from the shadow (maybe they thought Aurore Clement's curves were the cause of Sheen's famous heart attack during production and feared killing millions of viewers). Howard Stern's getting sued. Janet Jackson narrowly avoided it. *Sex & The City* is being toned down for its reruns. Stifling, you would think.

On the other hand, we have this wonderful thing: unrated videos. As a movie company, you can choose to totally swerve the MPAA's rating system. It's voluntary, as is the BBFC system in Britain, but in Britain if you don't get a BBFC rating the stores won't carry your movie. Here, they will. It's a phenomenon you'll be aware of if you are a keen importer. Extended, uncensored cuts of everything from *Caligula* to *American Pie* are available.

So I got to thinking, as I do, how about unrated videogames? M-For-Mature can only get you so far. Even something as resolutely horrific as *The Chronicles Of Riddick* sidesteps illustrated drug use and sex (it's a prison, for God's sake!). The ESRB's only rating above M is AO, Adults Only, which is synonymous with pornware; no publisher wants that on its game sleeve. But 'Unrated Version'… ooh, the mystery!

Just like their DVD counterparts, publishers could release cleaner, parent-pleasing mainstream versions alongside the no-holds-barred unrated editions. Let the market decide which is the more popular, although I can already guess. Sure, ask for ID at the point of sale. The pimpled child who sold me my copy of *Thief: Deadly Shadows* at Toys R Us was bound by store policy



OATMEAL-MUNCHING CHURCH-GOERS; THAT NOTHING EXCITING EVER HAPPEN"

to ask if I was over 17. Being in my twenties I was easily 20 years his senior, but it's not a problem, so long as it helps ordinary stores stock adult-oriented titles. Games could finally have all the good stuff that they tend to shy away from at the moment. Interactive experience would no longer be confined by concepts as arbitrary as decency! The depth of our experience would no longer be set by someone other than ourselves. In the personal world of the interactive, where the player's own disembodied self moves about a constructed world as limitless as imagination, it seems ever more important this choice be left to us. I was never Duke Nukem or Max Payne or Tommy Vercetti; I was always me. I should decide how far I want to go.

A predictable consequence of unrated games would be the emergence of artistically clumsy exploitationware, catering to the sadist, to the pervert. But as with the array of horrors available on DVD, from bum-fighting to niche porn, you wouldn't have to look if you didn't want to.

Many thanks

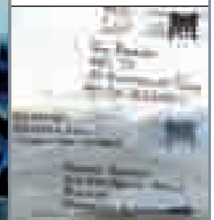
THE SHAPE



Even The Dude would get kind of pissed with America's creative censorship ideas.

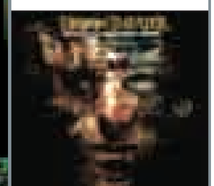
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

Morning Mail



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

CD Prices



WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY

AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

TAX TIME

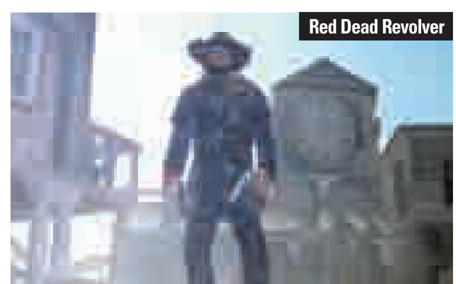


Isn't it bizarre, in the land that has everything, that everyone still has to do their own taxes? An enormous frenzy ensues during this time, a whirlwind of collecting up old receipts and filling in forms and consulting accountants, in order to file our Tax Return before the strict national deadline. Everyone hates it.

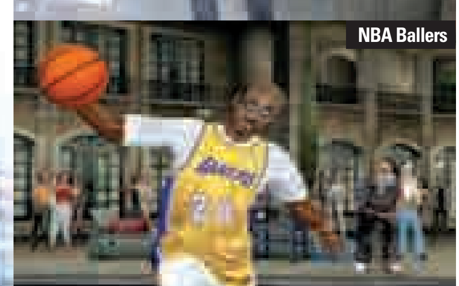
US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	Multi
2	The Chronicles Of Riddick	Vivendi	Multi
3	NBA Ballers	Midway	Multi
4	Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Multi
5	HP: Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	Multi
6	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
7	All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	Multi
8	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
9	Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony	Multi
10	Transformers	Atari	PS2

(Updated 19/6/04)



Red Dead Revolver



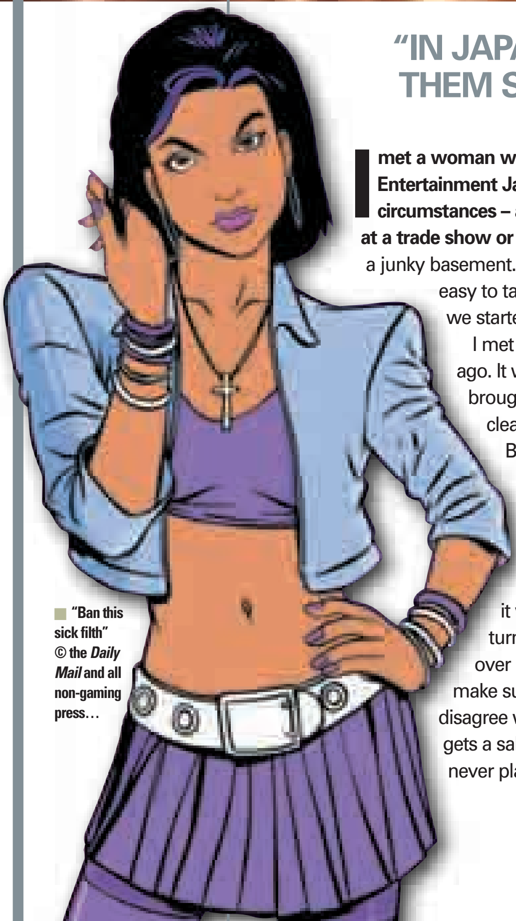
NBA Ballers





KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS



"Ban this sick filth" © the *Daily Mail* and all non-gaming press…

"IN JAPAN, PSYCHEDELIC MUSHROOMS WERE OUTLAWED IN 2001
THEM SO LONG AS YOU EXPLICITLY TELL THE CUSTOMER, OR THE

I met a woman who works for Sony Computer Entertainment Japan through completely natural circumstances – and by 'natural', I mean I didn't meet her at a trade show or a press junket. I met her at a rock show in a junky basement. Why we hit it off is hard to say. It's not easy to talk to people you don't know in Japan. Still, we started talking. We agreed to meet again.

I met her at a restaurant in Ueno just a few days ago. It was the day before my birthday. She'd brought me a strange little gift – an eyeglass-cleaner that also happens to be a plush Bomberman. You use the back of his smooth head to wipe your glasses. I asked her where she'd found the Bomberman. She said it was lying around her apartment. I asked her why it was lying around her apartment. She said it was because Hudson had given it to her. It turns out her job is in packaging. She looks over instruction manuals and game boxes to make sure that their artistic content does not disagree with the game's CERO rating. In return, she gets a salary and free copies of games, which she never plays. She uses them to decorate her apartment, she says. Though if I come over at any point, as humans do with people they like, I'm free to play any of them.

The point of this month's column, however, is not the games I'll be playing this Friday night. It's CERO. CERO stands for something, though I'm not sure what. It's a game rating system, as far as I know. They just recently created an 18+ rating so they could appropriately sell *Grand Theft Auto III*, and now *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. The ratings system, says my friend, is an absolute necessity for selling *Grand Theft Auto* in Japan, otherwise there'd be chaos. She says this with a sarcastic smirk. Impartial when it comes to game opinion, she's capable of making these kinds of jokes. I like her.

The film *Battle Royale*, in which high-school children kill each other as part of a satirical survival showdown, caused similar chaos in Japan. It's the reason the Japanese film ratings board created the R-17 rating. Yet Takashi Miike's *Ichi The Killer*, perhaps the most senselessly bloody and sexually violent film I've ever seen, didn't raise an eyebrow.

The CERO 18+ ranking, says my friend, was just recently applied to a *Boys Love* game. *Boys Love* is a new genre – a dating sim for girls in which the lovers are two high-school boys. In the section on the back of the package where the rating's reasons are explained, they were at a loss for how to represent sex between men. The traditional symbol – male and



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON TWENTY ONE: EXPLAINING PREFERENCES

Ore wa tako-fecchi da.	I have an octopus fetish.
Aa, sou desu ka?	Oh, is that so?
Un. Tsumetakute tabenikui niku sukida.	Yes. I like clammy, difficult-to-eat meat.
Ika wa yoroshii desu ka?	Would squid (ika) be alright?
Yoroshiku arimasen kedo, hajimaru mae ni *Ikaruga* yareba daijoubu.	It's not alright – however, should we play *Ikaruga* before getting started, I'll be fine.

YET IT'S STILL LEGAL TO SELL POLICE, THAT THEY'RE LEGAL"

female symbols touching – was replaced with a male-male symbol. The game producers had a problem with the 18+ rating, however. When asked why it had been so designated, CERO replied that it's because, in the game, there is a scene involving gambling for money in Japan, which is not legal in the real world. The scene was removed, and the game is now rated 15.

In Japan, this new friend of mine is quick to point out, psychedelic mushrooms were outlawed in 2001 – yet it's still legal to sell them so long as you explicitly tell the customer, or the police, that they're legal. Pachinko parlours award winning players with medals, which they sell next door to a speciality shop dealing in pachinko medals for money equal to how much money they would have won if gambling for money was legal.

I really like this woman. We share a sense of analogy. She made writing this quite easy. And she's also taking me to a sneak preview of *Spider-Man 2* three weeks before it hits other earthly theatres. Sony Pictures, you see. Ahh, yes.

Kind regards

Tim Rogers



Another set of not-entirely-foolproof ratings…

ACT YOUR AGE

I remember, in America, that putting a warning on a game like *Mortal Kombat II* used to make it a must-have for every 13 year old. Some fool tried to blame Acclaim, saying that it had made the game bloody and evil to attract kids on purpose. I look back and laugh. Of course *Mortal Kombat II* was aimed at kids under 17.

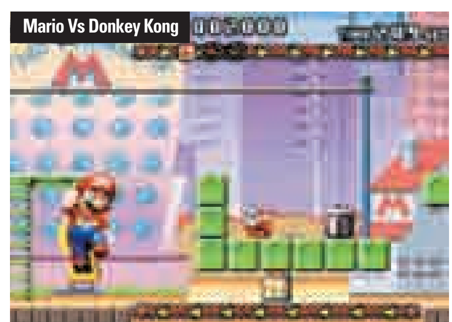
GTA: Vice City is selling very well in Japan. It's doing this, one imagines, because it's a good game, not just a sensational one. If sensationalism sold more than quality, those *Boys Love* games would be topping the charts. Think about it: most people don't like having their spines ripped out, yet they bought *MKII*. If Japanese people were American-style sensationalists, even old businessmen would be playing gay-love simulators.

"When a girl plays one of those *Boys Love* games, it's her decision," my Sony friend said. "They're that kind of taste. You play them because you want to play them. No matter how old you are, you've grown up to become the kind of person who wants to play that game. The rating is arbitrary." But what about the games with cartoon pre-teen girls and raping octopi? "That shit is just sick."

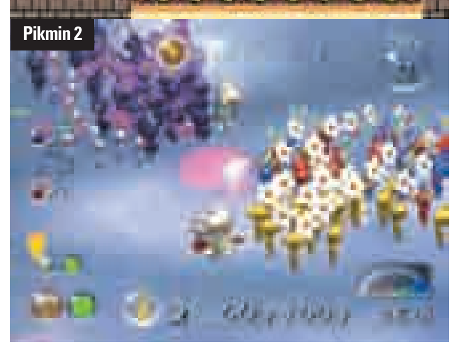
JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Pachinko Slot! Fist Of The North Star	Sammy	PS2
2	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	GBA
3	Famicom Mini: Gambare Goemon! Karakuri Douchu	Nintendo	GBA
4	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	GC
5	Super Robot Battle MX	Banpresto	PS2
6	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Capcom	PS2
7	Sakurazaka Fire Department	Irem	PS2
8	Wario World	Nintendo	GC
9	Famicom Mini: Dr Mario	Nintendo	GBA
10	Pachinko Slot Tokondensho: Inoki Festival	Success	PS2

(Updated 13/6/04 © 2004 Media Create Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved)



Mario Vs Donkey Kong



Pikmin 2

> **"WE'VE LEARNT SOMETHING NEW ON EVERY GAME WE'VE WORKED ON, EVERY SUCCESS AND FAILURE WE'VE HAD HAS CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS THE NEXT PROJECT"**
> *THE PICKFORD BROTHERS, ZED TWO*

STE AND JOHN PICKFORD

ZED TWO

Ste and John Pickford are not happy bunnies. Their respected development studio, Zed Two, was bought up by another company… and subsequently shut down. But why should we care about yet more disgruntled programmers? Well, for the Pickfords, development has been their life, and the pair have probably contributed to some of your favourite games of the last 20 years. John started programming on his ZX81 (and Ste took an interest in the graphics) and the brothers have since completed hundreds of projects, from *Ghosts 'N Goblins* on the C64 to *Feud* for the Spectrum and *Maximum Carnage* for the Mega Drive and SNES. The list, it seems, is endless, and the brothers' CVs include spells at Binary Concepts, Rare and Software Creations. In 1996, the pair formed their own company, Zed Two, their first project being *Wetrix* for the Game Boy. Warthog snapped up the studio in 2002, but Zed Two was soon shut down.

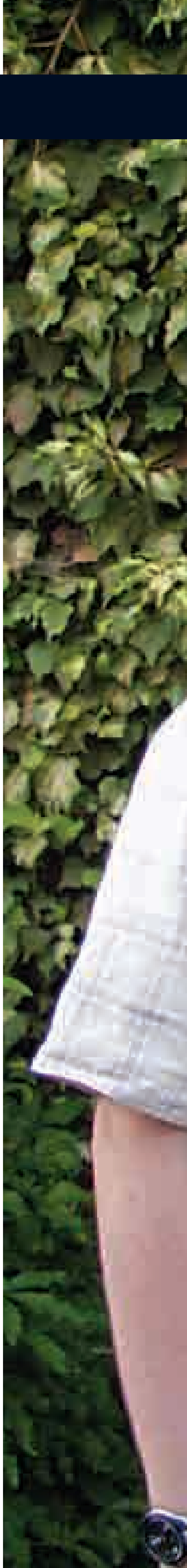
However, Ste and John are willing to look at the bigger picture, and in doing so reveal some frightening truths about the state of the industry. "What happened at Zed Two is probably part of the wider pattern," says John. "The business of mainstream game development has changed in such a way that there is virtually no place any more for the smaller studio." The Pickfords blame the increasing amount of money in the industry, and the unwillingness of larger publishers to take on more innovative products. "I think the root problem is the headlong rush the industry has had towards ever higher development costs," argues Ste. "Expensive, high-quality games like *Halo*, *Zelda* and so on are great, but expecting every game to have this level of incredibly high production value (which gamers, encouraged by big publishers and the media, now do) is, I believe, ultimately damaging for the industry." These are undoubtedly the words of a man from a smaller studio, but when games such as *RalliSport Challenge 2* and *Ico* fail to make an impact on the charts, they make a lot of sense.

The Pickfords now want to sail against the wind, as anyone who'd being making games for two decades would undoubtedly want to. "We're going to see if we can do something on a smaller scale," says John, "Something a little bit more personal, which we can fund and control ourselves. In the 20 years we've been making games we've never once been able to make a game the way we wanted to; we've always had to compromise one way or another due to publisher or licensor interference, or budget constraints." There's a sense that the brothers' gaming vision has never been shared by a larger company, and perhaps this is why Zed Two didn't gel with Warthog.

Looking at the beginnings of Zed Two, it's possible to isolate the Pickfords' motivation for founding the company. "We didn't form Zed Two in order to run a development studio," says Ste. "We formed it because we wanted to pursue our game ideas, and owning our own development studio was the only way we'd get that opportunity."

However, the Pickfords know that simply working independently won't bring their creativity into the spotlight, as the workings of a studio have to be combined with the creative process in order to make the end product a package, rather than just an idea on a screen. Games such as *Wetrix*, *Aqua Aqua* and *Future Tactics* have been very profitable for the brothers, but this has not come at the expense of the uglier aspects of owning an independent studio. "We're both proud of the way we ran the studio," says John. "We made plenty of mistakes, but treated everybody fairly and decently. We got games out of the door without the months of end-to-end weekends and late nights demanded by some studios, and didn't burn our staff out but maintained a relaxed and creative atmosphere and had an incredibly low staff turnover without paying particularly high wages."

The Pickford brothers reflect on their Zed Two days fondly, but in looking to the future their outlook is surprisingly upbeat considering the dark picture they have painted of the industry. "We've learnt something new on every game we've worked on," says Ste, "and every success and failure we've had has contributed towards the next project." We await the return of the kings…

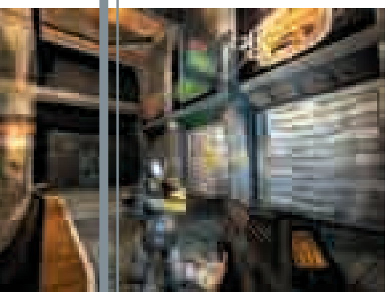
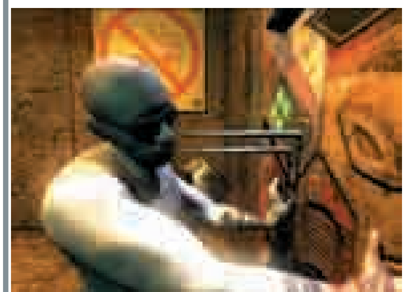


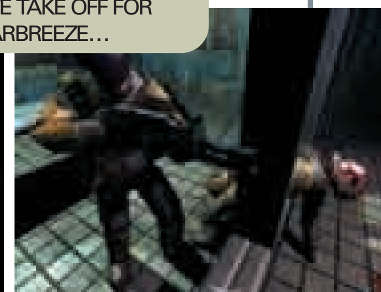


STE AND JOHN PICKFORD, FOUNDERS OF ZED TWO, HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GAMES INDUSTRY FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES. HOWEVER, THE BROTHERS NOW FIND THEMSELVES FOOTLOOSE AND FANCY-FREE…

COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH WE TAKE OFF FOR SWEDEN TO CHILL WITH STARBREEZE…



STARBREEZE STUDIOS

SCANDINAVIA IS ON THE RISE, AND WITH THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK LICENCE STARBREEZE IS POISED TO RIDE THE CREST OF THE WAVE. **GAMES™** SCRAMBLES ONTO THE BANDWAGON BEFORE IT BECOMES TOO CROWDED…



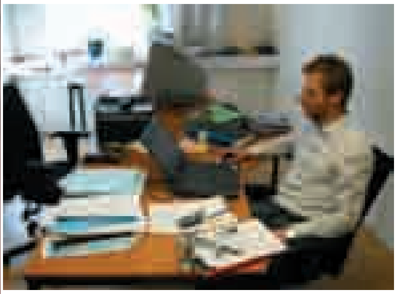
Starbreeze is based in Uppsala, and the studio claims Swedish developers are 'creative' and 'punctual' with 'high technological skills'.

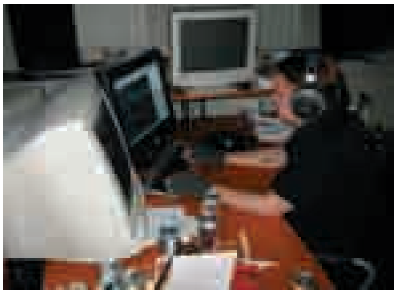




"THAT'S THE NEXT BIG THING FOR FIRST-PERSON GAMES – TO BREAK DOWN THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE FLOATING AROUND WITH A GUN"

JENS ANDERSSON, STARBREEZE







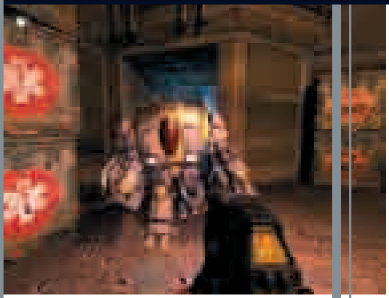


Located about 20 minutes drive away from Sweden's capital, Uppsala is a bustling town that happily conforms to all of its native country's stereotypes – it is bright, breezy and definitely beautiful. The sun is out in full force too, and the pastel colours of the town's buildings shine brightly on the cyclists going about their daily routine. All of which makes it stranger knowing that we're indoors in this archetypical summer town, playing one of the darkest, moodiest titles to hit the Xbox. Starbreeze's *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay* takes place in a dimly lit, grimy prison and protagonist Riddick is attempting a jailbreak in the only way he knows how – slitting throats, breaking necks and swearing gratuitously. And all mere metres away from a window that reminds us the town outside is blissful, smiling and carefree. Riddick? Meet Uppsala. Uppsala? This is Riddick.

It wasn't always like this for Starbreeze. To begin with, the company wasn't even based in Uppsala, only relocating following a merger with another Swedish developer. Producer Lars Johansson has the background. "Starbreeze was two teams in the beginning, two companies," he explains. "One was located in the north of Sweden and one here in Uppsala. The one I worked on in Uppsala was called O3 Games and after a couple of years we acquired Starbreeze and we all moved together down here to Uppsala." Two companies coming together can be a risky business as agendas clash, staff argue and vital projects are lost in the chaos of the transition period. Starbreeze was no different and it wasn't all smooth sailing to begin with, as the team point out. "At first, there were two different teams," says Johansson. "The O3 team was working on a strategy title at that time and the Starbreeze guys were working on *Enclave*." VP of technology, Jens Andersson, adds: "We were only eight people at the time working on *Enclave*. We were in final negotiations with the publisher, so basically when we were acquired all eight people moved down to Uppsala and became the core of the *Enclave* team." However, any teething troubles seem to have been overcome. "At first, there was this big division between the O3 people and the Starbreeze people," says lead artist Jens Matthies. "Then, slowly, we merged."

The coming together of the teams allowed Starbreeze to tackle its projects with gusto as O3 Games and Starbreeze played to each other's strengths; O3 Games brought the structure and experience, Starbreeze brought the enthusiasm and talent. As Andersson explains: "We were enthusiasts. We were pretty new and had no structure while O3 had a lot of people who were more experienced in running companies, more product managers. So that's actually what we needed for completing *Enclave*. So we came to O3 and we had the technology with us and a lot of

The Chronicles Of Riddick has already been called the best-looking game on the Xbox, and it's not really hard to see why…







REACH FOR THE STARS

Despite showing promise, none of Starbreeze's previous efforts have managed to capture the imagination of gamers as much as they could have done. Hopefully, *Riddick* will change all that…

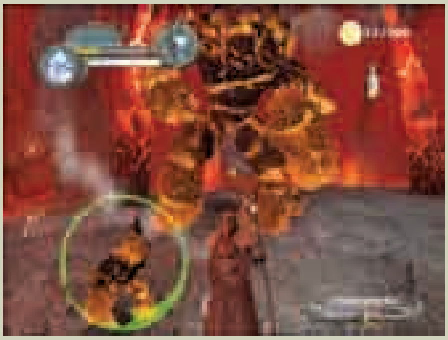
THE OUTFORCE (PC, 2001)

One of Starbreeze's first games following the merger, *Outforce* took the form of a traditional RTS game that mixed 2D and 3D styles to create a game that, while fairly accomplished, didn't exactly set the genre on fire. A shame, really.



ENCLAVE (MULTI, 2003)

The title that was, for many, the first taste of what Starbreeze had to offer. Set in a fantastical medieval world and giving players the chance to hack, slash and generally slaughter anything in their way, it sold fairly well on several formats.



KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE (MULTI, 2004)

Using Starbreeze's in-depth motion-capture knowledge, *Knights Of The Temple* followed a similar template to *Enclave* while enhancing the genre with improved graphics and physics.

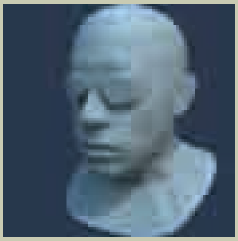


WALKING IN THE AIR

One of the many things Starbreeze wanted to change with *Chronicles Of Riddick* was the feeling that you're 'floating' around – a problem apparent in many first-person games, especially when you can't hear your own footsteps (such as with Free Radical's *TimeSplitters 2*) – hence the ability to see your own shadow and feet, along with the occasional third-person section. "What we did was take all the problems for third-person games and stick them in first-person games, to try to make it feel like a first-person game," says Jens Andersson. "It was a real nightmare but pretty fun. I think that's the next big thing for first-person games – to try and break down the feeling that you're just floating around with a gun."

DIESEL POWER

Musclebound baldy Vin Diesel plays Riddick in the flesh and on the Xbox…



Diesel has been closely involved with the game's development.



"PEOPLE FROM OTHER CULTURES CAN MAKE NEW THINGS IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND PUT SOME SPICE INTO GAMES"

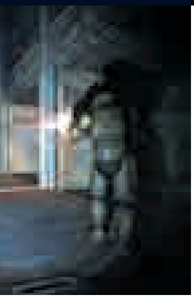
LARS JOHANSSON, STARBREEZE

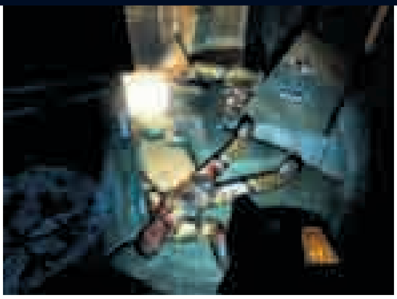
the core talent in the team." Johansson smiles. "It takes time to merge it together," he says. "But since then we've been able to get together a real tight team."

Indeed, if the banter between this Starbreeze trio is anything to go by, then divisions are a thing of the past. The recent trend of games from developers in Scandinavia and the Baltic states is one topic that sees them all chip in, as they muse over whether this will reflect positively on the games industry. "I'm not sure," admits Andersson. "There are a lot of good developers popping up both in Scandinavia and the Baltic countries." Matthies adds: "A lot of it depends on the amount of people and population. It's not comparable to the population in America, for example." Andersson replies: "But it's probably an upcoming trend, especially in the Eastern European countries. They have all kinds of benefits… they are cheaper." The trio think about this for a while. Matthies is the first to break the silence: "It doesn't cost as much for an American publisher to use a Baltic team than an American team." Andersson agrees: "And, of course, Scandinavia is a bit cheaper than the UK as well – more cost effective. A lot of Scandinavian developers are now proving themselves." So will this be beneficial for the videogames industry? "People from other cultures can make new things in different ways, so I'm sure it's going to put some spice into games," Johansson says. "I think it's good."

The Chronicles Of Riddick is the forthcoming title that will put Starbreeze on the radar regardless of how good the game is, because of the profile of the Riddick licence. But making a title based on a film licence, as the team points out, brings its own set of problems. "'Stick to the timetable' was the first thing I got when I spoke to the producer at Vivendi Universal Games," Johansson admits. "All the time we have to think of the date." However, Starbreeze used this strict date as an incentive rather than extra pressure, an indicator of the positive attitude within the company. "It's a good thing as well because you know the rules when you start doing it, you know there's no room for error," Matthies says. "So you take things really seriously and consider if everything you put in the game is worth the time. I think we matched it up in the time that was given to us."





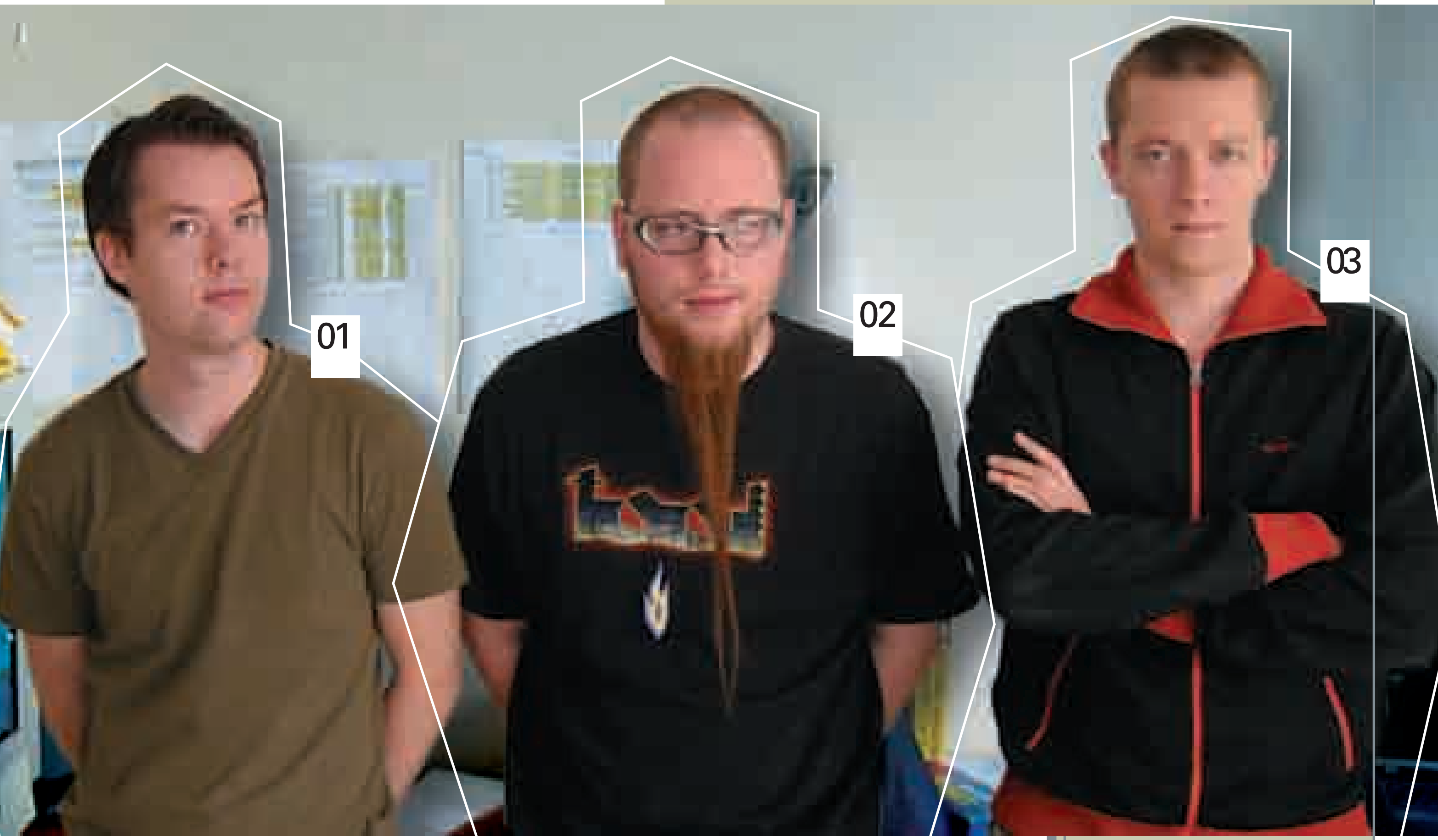


WHO'S WHO OF GAMING

1 JENS ANDERSSON
IN A NUTSHELL: Starbreeze's VP of technology, who previously worked on *Enclave.*

2 JENS MATTHIES
IN A NUTSHELL: Lead artist for *The Chronicles Of Riddick,* who also previously worked on *Enclave.*

3 LARS JOHANSSON
IN A NUTSHELL: Used to work for O3 Games, now the producer for *Escape From Butcher Bay.*



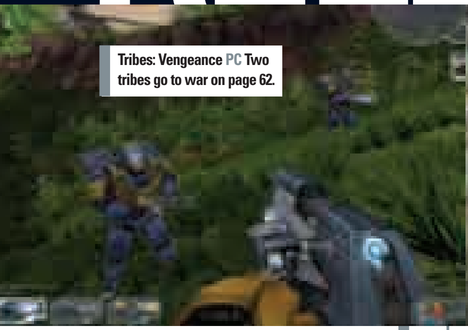
Even so, film licences are often viewed as inferior or rushed, which is no doubt one of the main fears Starbreeze has had to address. The team are quick to quash fears that *Escape From Butcher Bay* will suffer from the movie-licence curse. "That's one of the big things with making a movie title, you have this date to release it, you have to be on time, there's no way you can push the launch date for the game," admits Johansson. "I think that's the reason film licence games have that reputation." Matthies is well aware of this problem, adding that it's "something we set out to break", before Johansson continues: "the production guys at Vivendi Universal Games, they had made *The Thing,* which was also a movie licence, just before they worked on *Riddick,* so that gave us a lot of experience." So, theoretically, if they could push the release date back...? "There's always millions of things we want to do with the game," Andersson says. "I'm not sure it would make it better or worse but there are all kinds of things you find annoying or would polish a bit more or would take out. You could work for years and years but you have to stop some time, and I'm pretty happy all the things I wanted to see fixed were fixed. I think that goes for most people here."

The forthcoming film *The Chronicles Of Riddick* will be the first in a much-publicised trilogy, which is clearly good news for Vin Diesel, whose post-*Pitch Black* performances have left much to be desired. But does this mean we can expect sequels from Starbreeze? They fire nervy glances at each other. "We would consider it," Andersson says, before silence takes over again. Finally, Johansson says: "Who knows if there's going to be another *Riddick* game? I think the universe has a lot of potential…" But for now, the Starbreeze boys have earned a respite from the claustrophobic prisons of Butcher Bay. May we recommend the sun-kissed streets of Uppsala?



Enclave was the title that first got Starbreeze noticed, but *Chronicles* could really put the studio on the map.

RELEASE LISTS


Tribes: Vengeance PC Two tribes go to war on page 62.


Shadow Ops: Red Mercury Xbox War has never been so much of a muchness.


Conflict: Vietnam Multi Going back in time with SCi's shooter on page 68.



gamesTM MOST PLAYED

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Vivendi

It's always great to see a developer realise its full potential, and after a slightly shaky start, Starbreeze has come good with quite possibly the best-looking game on Xbox. Not the longest game ever or the most original but still a solid experience.



RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft

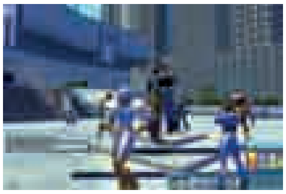
A second Xbox title? This is more a sign of quiet times in console land rather than a green-tinged bias on our part, but make no mistake about it – *RalliSport 2* is one of the best driving games out there, period. Online or off, the fact remains that we just love making cars dirty. Is that so wrong?



CITY OF HEROES

Format: PC
Publisher: TBC

Following the adventures of JesusMan – our digital avatar in Paragon City – many more crime waves have been dealt with thanks to an overwhelming plague of justice courtesy of the religious vigilante. Wonderfully straightforward but every bit as engaging as any other MMORPG, the crime-fighting escapades aren't getting old just yet…





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY '04			
23 July	Army Men: Sarge's War	Take 2	
TBC	Athens 2004	Sony	
AUGUST '04			
6 August	Catwoman	EA	
20 August	World Championship Snooker 2004	Codemasters	
27 August	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
27 August	Headhunter: Redemption	SEGA	
TBC	EyeToy Chat	Sony	
TBC	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
TBC	Shaman King: Power Of Spirit	Konami	
SEPTEMBER '04			
3 September	Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	
3 September	Neighbours From Hell	JoWood	
3 September	NHL 2005	EA	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Crimson Sea 2	Koei	
TBC	Burnout 3	EA	Wanted
TBC	Crisis Zone	Sony	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	Wanted
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Juiced	Acclaim	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	.hack//OUTBREAK	Atari	
TBC	The Punisher	THQ	
TBC	The Movies	Activision	
TBC	Resident Evil: Outbreak	Capcom	
TBC	Monster Hunter	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	
TBC	StarCraft: Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	
TBC	Gradius V	Konami	Wanted
TBC	IndyCar Series 2005	Codemasters	
TBC	Jak 3	Sony	
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
TBC	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
TBC	Ratchet & Clank 3	Sony	
TBC	Killzone	Sony	
TBC	FIFA Football 2005	EA	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Far Cry Instincts	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar	Wanted
TBC	Sly 2: Band Of Thieves	Sony	



GAMECUBE

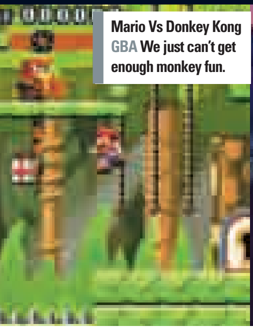
Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY '04			
23 July	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	
AUGUST '04			
6 August	Catwoman	EA	
27 August	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
TBC	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
SEPTEMBER '04			
3 September	Neighbours From Hell	JoWood	
3 September	NHL 2005	EA	
3 September	Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	Wanted
24 September	Animal Crossing	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	Wanted
TBC	WWE: Day Of Reckoning	THQ	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Mario Tennis	Nintendo	
TBC	The Movies	Activision	
TBC	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	
TBC	Spy Vs Spy	TDK	
TBC	Medabots: Infinity	Nintendo	
TBC	Geist	Nintendo	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	Donkey Konga	Nintendo	
TBC	Nintendo Puzzle Collection	Nintendo	
TBC	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Star Fox 2	Nintendo	
TBC	Mario Story 2	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	FIFA Football 2005	EA	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	



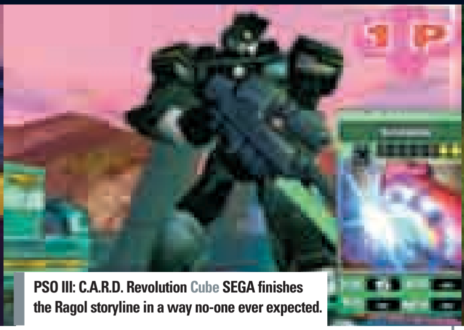
XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY '04			
23 July	Ghost Master	Empire	
30 July	Sudeki	Microsoft	
AUGUST '04			
6 August	Catwoman	EA	
13 August	The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay	Vivendi	
20 August	World Championship Snooker 2004	Codemasters	
20 August	Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	Wanted
27 August	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
TBC	Headhunter: Redemption	SEGA	
TBC	Madden NFL 2005	EA	

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES


Mario Vs Donkey Kong GBA We just can't get enough monkey fun.


Kingdom Hearts II PS2 It's about time Square Enix stopped taking the Mickey…


PSO III: C.A.R.D. Revolution Cube SEGA finishes the Ragol storyline in a way no-one ever expected.


Star Wars Battlefront Multi See page 76 for Storm Trooper application forms.

SEPTEMBER '04			
3 September	Neighbours From Hell	JoWood	
3 September	NHL 2005	EA	
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	
24 September	Samurai Warriors	Koei	
TBC	Burnout 3	EA	Wanted
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	Wanted
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Fable	Microsoft	
TBC	Juiced	Acclaim	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Spy Vs Spy	TDK	
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	
TBC	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
TBC	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher	Wanted
TBC	Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	
TBC	IndyCar Series 2005	Codemasters	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi	
TBC	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
TBC	StarCraft: Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Dead Or Alive Ultimate	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
TBC	FIFA Football 2005	EA	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	BC	Microsoft	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY '04			
TBC	Chaos League	Digital Jesters	
AUGUST '04			
6 August	Catwoman	EA	
20 August	World Championship Snooker 2004	Codemasters	
27 August	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
TBC	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
SEPTEMBER '04			
3 September	NHL 2005	EA	
10 September	Myst IV: Revelation	Ubisoft	
17 September	Creature Conflict	Cenega	
17 September	The Sims 2	EA	
24 September	Silent Hunter III	Ubisoft	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Juiced	Acclaim	
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault	EA	
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
Q3 '04			
TBC	The Suffering	Midway	
TBC	Evil Genius	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
TBC	Black 9	Majesco	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Spider-Man 2	Activision	
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
TBC	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
TBC	Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	
TBC	Kohan II: Kings Of War	Take 2	
TBC	Warhammer Online	SEGA	
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Oblivion Lost	THQ	Wanted
TBC	Rome: Total War	Activision	Wanted
TBC	FIFA Football 2005	EA	
TBC	Shade: Wrath Of Angels	Cenega	
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Wanted



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY '04			
16 July	Hamtaro: Ham Ham Games	Nintendo	Wanted
16 July	Sonic Advance 3	THQ	
16 July	Fire Emblem	Nintendo	
TBC	Yu-Gi-Oh!: Reshef Of Destruction	Konami	
AUGUST '04			
6 August	Catwoman	EA	
TBC	Shaman King: Master Of Spirits	Konami	
TBC	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
SEPTEMBER '04			
17 September	Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	
TBC	Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django	Konami	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Donkey Kong Country 2	Nintendo	
TBC	CT Special Forces 3: Bioterror	LSP	
TBC	Megaman Battle Network 4	Capcom	
TBC	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	
TBC	Yu Yu Spirit Detective	Atari	
TBC	Pokémon Leaf Green/Fire Red	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue	Nintendo	
TBC	FIFA Football 2005	EA	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. Which is completely beyond our control, so don't get all up in our faces, girlfriend.

games™ ON THE HORIZON

THE WARRIORS

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Rockstar Games
In yet another unsurprising no-show from LA, we're still yet to get a glimpse of Rockstar's gang-based film licence for which it first started the hype train a-rolling at last year's E3. Expect the usual levels of violence, polish, sales, quality and hype that you would from a Rockstar game. Well, except maybe *Manhunt*…



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo
After hordes of ravenous fans blew their tops over the E3 video they had been waiting years to see, it's a little worrying to think that we may not find out much more about the game until next year's show. Fingers crossed for a big Tokyo Game Show appearance, but short of that Link will most likely be in limbo until 2005.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS

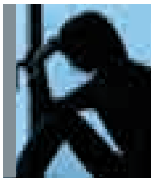
Format: Xbox, PC
Publisher: Activision
With the guys at Obsidian (drawn from ex-*Fallout*, *Baldur's Gate* and *Icewind Dale* teams) still hammering away at this much-anticipated sequel, it'll be at least February by the time we get our hands on it. Still, gives us plenty of time to work on our Force powers.



'THINK TANK'

THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

TWO SHOWS… ONE FUTURE?



By the time you read this, it will be less than a month until the next big date in the industry – the ECTS. Or at least it would still be a big date if it wasn't for the fact that there are now two shows vying for our attention; come 3 September, most people who aren't busy working to a milestone deadline will be torn between visiting the tried-and-tested ECTS and ELSPA's new effort, the European Games Network (or EGN).

Of course, whether the clash in dates is actually because of poor planning, an attempt to take advantage of the school-holiday crowd – Game Stars Live, a public event instead of EGN's 'trade only' status, is running side-by-side with EGN – or something more sinister on ELSPA's part is all open to debate. The big question right now is whether either event will be worth attending at all…

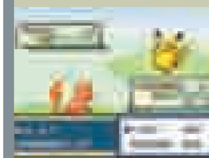
Okay, so perhaps it's widely agreed that the ECTS has seen better days judging by the last few years, but then it had the ability to demand publisher presence on the back of the PlayStation Experience, as exhibiting in the more appealing public show meant having a stand at the trade one. EGN has no such stipulation in place; great for those wishing to draw public support and save money, but not for anyone expecting to see the big names, who's only going to be disappointed. EGN's list of names so far might be fairly impressive, but it's a far cry from where ECTS was just a few years ago. Where are Sony, Nintendo or Microsoft, for instance? Not on the EGN exhibitor list, that's for sure.

Fingers crossed, we won't have this dilemma next year – no doubt when it's all over, someone will have the balls to back down. Who will it be? That's anyone's guess

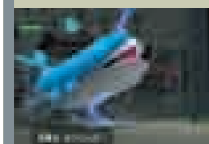
'Mr X' works for a respected big-name publisher and wishes to remain anonymous

FROM THE FRONT

NINTENDO'S GAMECUBE HAS A REVIVAL AS POKÉMANIA STRIKES AGAIN, AND THE XBOX GETS A HEAD START



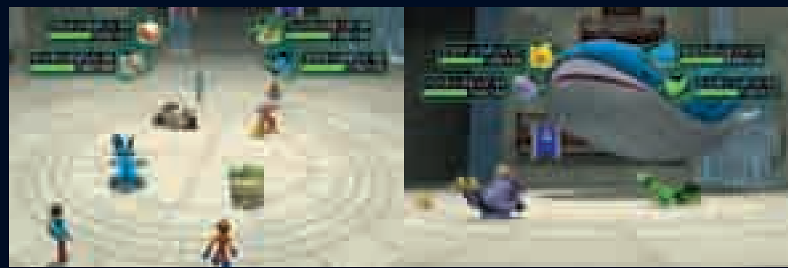
The GBA has enjoyed success with *Pokémon*.



Colosseum has seen Pokéfans go Cube crazy.



New *Pokémon* titles will keep Nintendo afloat.



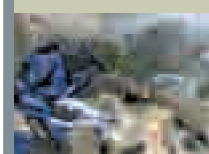
POKÉMON COLOSSEUM SPELLS GOOD NEWS FOR NINTENDO

CUBE SALES EVOLVE

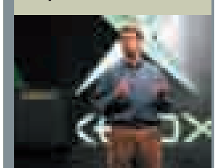
If there's one thing we've discovered with the GameCube this year, it's that you can never write it off. One minute third-party developers are cancelling titles left, right and centre, the next it has an impressive E3 line-up that really revives interest in Nintendo's machine.

The good news continues as the release of *Pokémon Colosseum* has triggered impressive sales for the GameCube in Europe and seen its market share doubling to a mighty 32 per cent. Of course, whether Nintendo will be able to maintain this figure remains to be seen, but it does prove that there's still plenty of interest in Pikachu and the rest of his cuddly pals.

Nintendo's *Pokémon* franchise has now shifted an astonishing 25 million units in Europe – and these are actual sales, not just shipments. The recent Game Boy Advance games *Pokémon Sapphire* and *Pokémon Ruby* have now sold 3.3 million units, and



Halo 2 won't do Microsoft any harm in the market…



Will an early launch really help Xbox 2?

MICROSOFT COULD STEAL MARKET SHARE WITH PREMATURE XBOX 2 LAUNCH

EARLY BIRD

Industry heads are expecting the early release of Xbox 2 to pay dividends for Microsoft. Speaking with cautious optimism at the recent Piper Jaffray Conference in New York, Electronics Boutique president Jeff Griffiths thought Microsoft could gain a large slice of the market. "They could get a 30 per cent share," Griffiths began. "I think if they got less than that then they'd be disappointed. If they come out earlier than Sony, if they have the breadth of exclusive titles like Sony had for the PS2, I think they'd definitely have potential for market-share leadership."

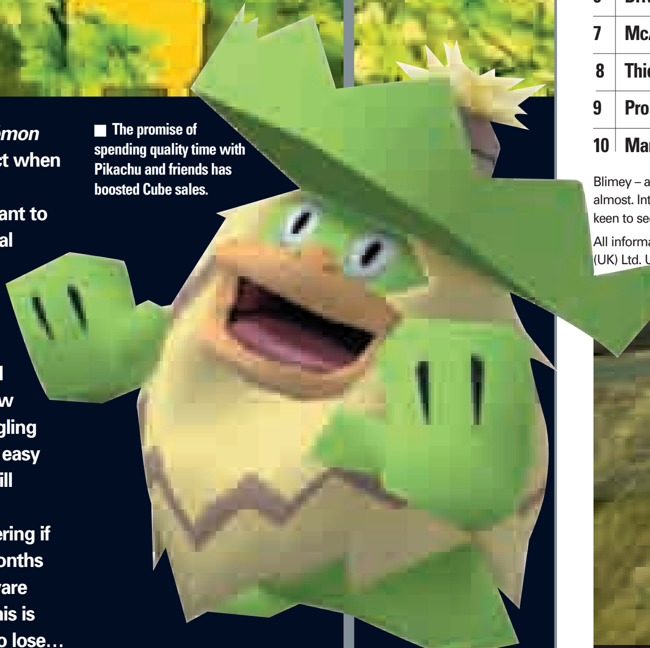
Brian Farrell, CEO of THQ, also believes that Microsoft could gain early success with Xbox 2, but is clear about what the company must do "Do they have to have a solid value proposition? Yes. Do they have to have aggressive marketing? Yes."

Even though the future seems bright for Microsoft, we mustn't forget that we've seen this before. Despite launching well ahead of the PS2 and having some impressive software, SEGA's Dreamcast was unable to convert the masses, who were happy to wait for Sony's next machine. Let's just hope Microsoft has learnt from SEGA's misfortune…









handheld titles *Pokémon Fire Red* and *Pokémon Leaf Green* look likely to have a similar effect when they're released later this year.

In the meantime, Nintendo is going to want to close the gap between itself and nearest rival Microsoft. Although it's still trailing to the Xbox in the UK, the GameCube has managed to maintain a significant lead in both France and Germany. While we're pleased to see the GameCube doing so well at the moment, it'll be interesting to see how the introduction of the DS will affect it. Juggling three different consoles isn't going to be an easy task, and despite promises that the Cube will continue to be supported once Nintendo's Revolution is released, we can't help wondering if this will be the case. But with the winter months soon approaching and a host of Cube software promised by the end of the year, it seems this is one fight that Nintendo is determined not to lose…

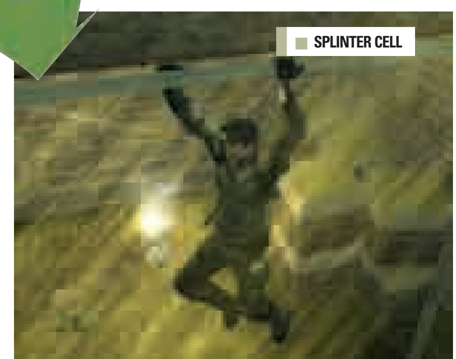
■ The promise of spending quality time with Pikachu and friends has boosted Cube sales.

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

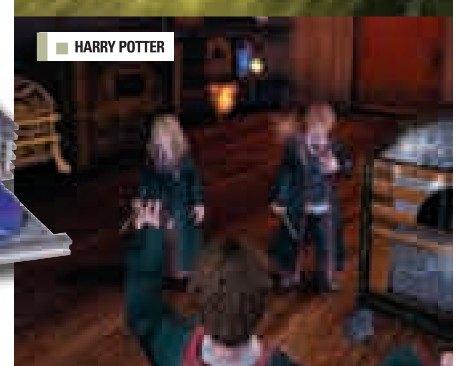
	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
2	Harry Potter: Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA Games	Multi
3	UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	Multi
4	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	Multi
5	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
6	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
7	McAfee Internet Security V6.0	McAfee	PC
8	Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Multi
9	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	Multi
10	Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	GC

Blimey – a month where the chart is virtually free of anti-virus software… well, almost. Interestingly, *Driv3r* slips in after going on sale a week early. We'll be keen to see if it moves up once people actually play the game…

All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of ELSPA (UK) Ltd. UK Full Price Sales Charts (All Formats) (w/e 19 June 2004)



■ SPLINTER CELL



■ HARRY POTTER



■ UEFA 2004

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

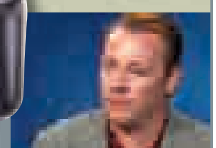
SALES DOUBLE FOR THE PS2 AFTER AMERICAN PRICE CUT



A triumphant Microsoft may have been quick to point out that the Xbox has overtaken the PS2 in hardware sales, but Sony was ready with a devastating counter-attack. After cutting the price of the PlayStation2 to $149, sales for the machine rose by a staggering 216 per cent, according to the company.

"This price drop came when we felt it was strategically the best timing to expand the market," said SCEA vice president Jack Tretton. "It's gratifying to see consumers respond so aggressively to our commitment to meet their growing expectations. The new sales data provides a powerful proof point that consumers – both our mass-market, core audience and casual gamers – are placing their confidence in the longevity of PlayStation2, which we see as absolutely essential to the health of the industry."

Considering the PS2's recent sales slump was apparently due to the machine reaching its peak, this turnaround is impressive. With Microsoft and Sony now having cut the price of their machines with such great success, we expect Nintendo to do the same.



■ SCEA's Tretton is pleased with the PS2's turnaround.





It's a kind of magic… **Chaos: The Battle Of The Wizards Spectrum [Games Workshop] 1985**

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN



"WE COULD RUN 16 PLAYERS BUT HAVE NO OTHER CARS ON SCREEN. BUT BURNOUT ISN'T BURNOUT WITHOUT THE TRAFFIC SO WE HAD TO KEEP IT IN"

ALEX WARD, LEAD DEVELOPER, CRITERION



■ Drifting and avoiding traffic is for pansies – get physical or you'll never fill that boost bar.



■ There will be almost 70 vehicles in *Burnout 3*, most of them unlocked by driving like a madman.

DEVELOPER PROFILE

Not content with merely giving RenderWare to the world (a quarter of all titles in development are using it), Criterion continues to push the boundaries of its widely used development tools and has repeatedly raised the bar in terms of PS2 visuals. Its games aren't half bad either…

HISTORY

- **BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT** 2002 [Multi]
- **BURNOUT** 2001 [Multi]
- **AIRBLADE** 2001 [PS2]

IT'S ALL ABOUT KICKING ASS AND TAKING LICENCE PLATES

PS2 **It's a scorching summer's afternoon as a carload of cynical games journalists arrive at EA's UK offices.** Wisecracks about the softco's presumed ownership of the surrounding villages abound as the quartet makes its way to the doors of the impressive building. Inside, EA bigwigs are also smiling, but not for the same reason – they know they're about to shut us up. Indeed, mere minutes into a presentation by Criterion lead developer Alex Ward, forced poker faces gave way to dropped jaws, sniggering and uncontrollable fits of whooping the likes of which usually only emanate from Americans at trade shows when Master Chief jumps on someone else's space bike. *Burnout 3* is a very special game.

Ward is keen to highlight just how much the game has changed. "When the best *Burnout 2* players come to their first race and try and stay away from everybody and not touch anything, they'll lose – the guys who get three Takedowns on the first straight are going to beat them because they've got more boost," he says. Ah, the Takedown. Why overtake the guy in front when you can ram him off the road in a shower of twisted metal and sparks? And get rewarded for it? "That's why you can steal boost now," Ward continues. "The risk/reward and having players steal boost from you is really key, so you have to play in the new *Burnout 3* way."

Given that you can now boost at any time (Burnout gauge allowing), there's a lot more emphasis on the new ways of earning this essential speed advantage – battling with opponents fills the bar quicker than traditional dangerous driving techniques, while Takedowns enlarge the gauge itself, allowing for even longer periods of stomach-turning speed. For the final insult, the bullet time-esque Impact Time allows minor control of your wrecked vehicle after being taken out so you can try to take the rest of the pack down with you – especially useful in the game's most modified section, Crash mode.

The tally of 30 Crash Junctions in *Burnout 2* has risen to a staggering one hundred black spots, but that's not all. In a similar vein to *Monkey Target* in *Super Monkey Ball* the roads are sprinkled with power-ups that can multiply your score (usually tucked away behind negative collectables like the Heart Breaker, which halves your score), and with jumps, ramps and multiple ways of tackling each junction, you may never tire of writing off cars.

But it gets better. Total enough traffic and you'll enable the Crash Breaker, a final hurrah that detonates a bomb under your car, demolishing everything nearby and letting you take just enough control of the direction of the blast to aim for a few more trucks or even a hard-to-reach power-up. As if that weren't enough, all hundred crashes are playable in both Competitive (battle for the best power-ups and crash locations) and Co-operative (where both players need to collect the same icon to earn its bonus) modes as well as sequential party play for up to eight players. Happy now?

As well as traditional racing and Crash modes, Criterion has gone to town with the gameplay options. Pretty much every racing staple is here in typically impressive form but the highlight is newcomer Road Rage, summed up perfectly by Alex Ward. "It's like a bar fight," he says. "You start the ▷

"TOTAL ENOUGH CARS AND YOU'LL ENABLE THE CRASH BREAKER, A FINAL HURRAH THAT DETONATES A BOMB UNDER YOUR CHASSIS"

THE INTEGRATION GAME

With the advent of titles like *Project Gotham Racing 2* and *RalliSport Challenge 2*, it would be nothing short of foolish for *Burnout 3* to be released into the wild without a competitive level of integration between the online and single-player aspects. Proving that they're no fools, the miracle workers at Criterion have made sure that as well as being able to play every course, mode and crash junction online, there will be scoreboards and rankings worked into the game for every possible event, meaning that you'll always know how you stack up against the craziest mentalists on the road – as if you need any more incentive to throw expensive cars into multi-million-pound pile-ups for hours on end…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Criterion
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-6 online)

Smash your way to the finish line in this stunning sequel. If the series continues to grow at this rate, the pace and content of *Burnout 4* could be too much for our puny human brains to comprehend.



Yes, this is running on a PlayStation 2. At 60 frames a second. Quit pinching yourself already.

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN CONT.

"CRITERION HAS STUCK TWO FINGERS UP AT BIZARRE CREATIONS BY SOMEHOW MANAGING TO GET THE GAME RUNNING AT A SOLID 60 FRAMES PER SECOND"

race, somebody breaks a bottle over your head, and you go and get them." In single-player, this is more or less an endurance event to see how many cars you can wreck before becoming scrap yourself. The debut of persistent damage in this game means that after several full-on impacts the race is over, but car performance remains suitably arcadey until the moment you wrap your wheels around a tree for the last time. Take it online, though, and it's a whole different insurance claim. Ward sums up the mode as "A 'fox and hound'-type racing mode where three players have to race to the finish and the other three have to smash the other guys up." It really is that simple.

It's no word of a lie when we tell you that the PS2 version of *Burnout 3* makes even the Xbox version of its predecessor look almost decrepit. Criterion's newly formed ties with EA have allowed the two parties to combine their power, meaning that as well as a ridiculously playable addition to the *Burnout* series, the third outing has the high production values and awesome special effects that are expected from the many visually stunning licensed titles that pour off the EA production line. Criterion has also stuck two fingers up at Bizarre Creations by somehow managing to get the game running at a solid 60 frames per second. Impressive stuff.

As if developing the most beautiful PS2 game (not to mention one of the finest-looking Xbox titles) of the year wasn't enough, Criterion has also ensured September will be a month of ear-splitting noise. Again, the EA influence makes its presence felt with the inclusion of a 40-something-strong licensed soundtrack replacing the in-house tunes of the previous two games. Known artists include Faith No More, who will spearhead the rock-heavy playlist, although Xbox owners will still be able to opt for their own custom soundtracks if they prefer. Songs will be tied together – *SSX3* style – by a Crash FM DJ who will segue tunes with reports on recent crashes and upcoming races, while the screams of terrorised traffic and sounds of expensive repairs are every bit as good as they've ever been.

But as good as every individual element may be, a game is only as good as the sum of its parts. We've yet to be let loose with a massive amount of *Burnout 3*'s plentiful content but if everything else is on a par with (dare we say better than?) the areas we've already enjoyed then this is a very real challenger for Master Chief's seemingly sewn-up 'Game Of The Year' rosette. The game represents monumental growth and evolution since *Burnout 2*, which, in turn, was a significant leap forward from the first game. In fact, it's hard to think of a recent series that can boast more progression in such a short space of time, indeed within a single generation.

Very few games can genuinely make the player walk away with such a feeling of satisfaction after victory, such wince-inducing terror during a near-death experience, or such a maniacal cartoon grin after seeing the dark side of the physics engine. *Burnout 3* can, does and will. You have been warned.



Vehicles are now so destructible that they are often unrecognisable after a smash.

CHALLENGE EVERYONE

***Burnout 3* is Criterion's first stab at network gaming, and Alex Ward says much of the game has been developed with online play in mind. "*SOCOM* is a really nice team-based game," he says, "but you go online and suddenly it's a *Quake* deathmatch." *Burnout 3*'s aggressive attitude means on- and offline games are equally violent, so the online argy-bargy shouldn't be a problem. "What's the worst that's going to happen?" Ward asks. "You make me crash, I'm just going to make you crash." Road Rage mode has also been changed to stop players hanging back to avoid destruction then racing on to win. "I couldn't play *FIFA* online and win by not scoring any goals because all the other players are dead," Ward reasons. Quite.**

PUBLISHER PROFILE

■ Renowned (and often scorned) for its annual updates and movie tie-ins, Electronic Arts' involvement in *Freedom Fighters* and *Final Fantasy X-2* marks the start of a radical new branch for the company. With *Burnout 3* and *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* on the way, EA has never had such a widely appreciated portfolio.

HISTORY

- **FIFA FOOTBALL 2004** 2003 [Multi]
- **SSX TRICKY** 2001 [Multi]
- **MUTANT LEAGUE FOOTBALL** 1993 [Mega Drive]



■ Heated vehicular battles will often lead to one or more racers taking the scenic route…



■ How to ruin someone's day, *Burnout 3*-style. Hospitalisation shouldn't be this much fun.



"IT'S STILL A RACING GAME – YOU RACE TO THE FINISH LINE AND WINNING IS WINNING. WE'VE JUST CHANGED THE WAY YOU DO THAT"
ALEX WARD, LEAD DEVELOPER, CRITERION

■ Take down a rival and you can expect to be hounded until your precious wheels are blown off.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BLINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT…

BURNOUT 2 x VARIETY x MY EYES! = BURNOUT 3

T.H.U.G. 2: WORLD DESTRUCTION TOUR



There's always time for a little patriotism, especially if you're the President…



Had enough? Just Spazz Out and show that board who's the boss.



Here's how much height the skaters are capable of reaching this time. Anyone got a sickbag handy?

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SKATE IT 'TIL IT BREAKS

T.H.U.G. + JACKASS x RAMPAGE = T.H.U.G. 2

"PLAY AS YOURSELF, NOT A PRO SKATER, AND MAKE YOUR WAY THROUGH A PLOT-TWISTING, TRUE-TO-LIFE STORY"

ACTIVISION PRESS RELEASE

DEVELOPER PROFILE

When Neversoft produced the first *Tony Hawk* game all those years ago on the PSone, little did we know that it would go on to be one of the biggest and most successful franchises in gaming. Luckily, so far, the developer has continued to innovate with each release.

HISTORY

- **TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND** 2003 [Xbox]
- **TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3** 2002 [Xbox]
- **SPIDER-MAN** 1999 [PSone]



For all the off-board activity, there's still time for old-school half pipes.



The ability to put up stickers advertising *T.H.U.G. 2* won't do the brand recognition any harm.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube, GBA
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Neversoft
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-6 PS2 Online)

Get back on the streets and take skating to the nth degree – break stuff like the A-Team, slow down time like Blinx or simply do yourself a serious injury like those *Jackass* 'professionals'.

JUST WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON ANYWAY?

Apparently, it's all in the way you name something. A sequel with the number six in the title would probably get weary hacks moaning about the lack of any kind of originality in the industry, but just a two? That's fine – it means it's merely the follow-up to a blockbusting hit. Well done, Activision, very clever. But then this sort of re-writing of history is almost acceptable on this occasion, as the last instalment of the series really did add a great deal to the *Tony Hawk* formula – everything from the chance to put yourself in the game in a 'Day In The Life' kind of a way, to the chance to drive cars and jump off the board in order to rack up some extra points was enough of a departure from the older titles.

So how is *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* going to top the last game without taking the series too far from its roots and alienating the audience that has made it such a hit? The answer, of course, is to just make everything bigger. First, there's an even larger roster of skaters to choose from in the Team Bam versus Team Hawk street war. Most people will probably stick to Hawk himself or televisual jackass Bam Margera, but it's always good to have more options.

Neversoft is also making the cities even bigger and more interactive. It's all about creating the ultimate lines for the professionals to skate, and if that means destroying parts of the scenery (as the new subtitle suggests) so that it crumbles and creates new areas for tricking then so be it. Best of all for those who felt that *Underground* deviated a little too much from the traditional formula is the return of Classic mode, chock-full of the score, gap and collection goals the Hawk had to deal with before he and his crew were allowed to drive cars and such tomfoolery.

The scale of the game is much bigger this time too. Whereas before most of the tricks may have been performed on the ground or a simple quarter pipe, *T.H.U.G. 2* encourages you to use the entire height and width of the huge city to your advantage, leaping off, over or through huge skyscrapers and performing death-defying leaps that make even the sickest stunts of previous outings in the series look like child's play. To help with this, the worryingly bullet time-like Focus mode will allow skaters to slow down time in order to squeeze in extra button presses or moves and glean the most points possible from every single jump.

Tony Hawk's Underground gave you the chance to create the ultimate skater and there are even more options on offer now; in fact, you could easily spend hours perfecting the ultimate outfit and designing the best tattoo set before you've even stepped onto your (specially designed) board. Extra characters also have more involvement in Story mode and, similar to the later stages of *T.H.U.G.*, much of *World Destruction Tour* will see you pull together a team from the world's best skaters, people off the streets, American presidents and even Bam Margera's portly pa Phil in an attempt to out-skate all challengers, and switching characters on the fly will help this no end.

Add to all this the usual mix of skate modes and create-a-trick options that have provided the series' longevity and it looks as if this is one sequel that doesn't deserve the scorn usually reserved for follow-ups. Far from it – those of us who've exhausted the last game are waiting with baited breath to go back down to the underground for one more fix…

TEMPER, TEMPER

As well as introducing new characters, the *Tony Hawk* games constantly enhance the amount of tricks that can be performed or created. Just to show that not all pro skaters are as cool-headed as Mr Hawk, we came across a move where the skater has simply had enough, Spazzed Out (as the trick is known) and booted the board away. Whether this move can be used to regain composure à la *Outlaw Golf* or if it simply allows the player to vent a little steam between more taxing goals remains to be seen, but with so much further to fall this time around, temper tantrums could become common both on and off screen.

"YOU COULD EASILY SPEND HOURS PERFECTING THE ULTIMATE OUTFIT AND DESIGNING THE BEST TATTOO SET"

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT





The melee combat can feel very strange to start with, but after a few games it all starts to make sense

IS UNREAL FINALLY LIVING UP TO ITS NAME ON CONSOLE?

On the PC the *Unreal* brand has always stood for quality. However, on the Xbox all we've had so far are a couple of very lazy ports, which is why alarm bells may be ringing in your head once you learn that this new instalment for the Xbox has been heavily modified for the console market. (On the plus side, at least *The Liandri Conflict* isn't just another a slimmed-down PC conversion.)

So what do we mean by modified? Characters now have special abilities, there's a lot of hand-to-hand fighting and – are you sitting down? – the game can now be played from the third-person perspective; a very odd move for the *Unreal* franchise and a feature that will no doubt be considered an insult by most *Unreal* fans. What is Epic playing at? Keep those quills in your ink pots for now, however, because this third-person mode works surprisingly well, even if it does feel a little strange to begin with.

It is, of course, an optional extra (Epic isn't stupid), but once you've racked up a few kills in this mode you'll wonder what all the fuss is about. The controls retain the feel of the first-person mode but allow you to get a much grander view of your surroundings – something any player should welcome. The third-person view is also essential if you want to make the most of the character-specific special moves and melee combat features. If you want, you can have the best of both worlds by keeping the first-person view but switch to third-person whenever you draw your melee weapon.

The new hand-to-hand combat moves make for some of the more exciting features of the game. Melee weapons include axes, staffs, swords, dual knives and wrist blades, and when using these you can lock onto a target, perform dash moves and generally jump around making a nuisance of yourself. The gameplay balancing has been very well thought out here because if you do come up against a wise guy with a gun you can use your melee weapon to deflect shots. Obviously, timing is everything using this method but we can bet there are going to be a lot of players who choose to play without their guns. Once you become accomplished at this you can even deflect shots back to where they came from; we can't imagine where the developer got that idea from…

Whatever your choice of playing style it's catered for here, which, as you might guess, means the return of character statistics, starting weapons and special moves as seen in *Unreal Championship*. It's the same set-up as before: 14 characters ranging from the small, skinny, nimble ones to big guys with 'trigger happy' written all over their faces. The difference this time is that with the new melee feature the skinny guys will actually stand a chance. There's also a lot more emphasis on acrobatics in this instalment – mastering double jumps and bouncing off walls is almost as essential as learning to shoot straight.

There are plenty of changes being made here, and from what we've seen they're all for the better. It seems Epic has realised that substance is needed in the one-player game. There's now a huge campaign mode in addition to the basic tournament ladder, and over 35 perfectly designed levels to get to grips with along the way. No doubt you can also expect a healthy amount of downloads after release to keep your thumbs aching. Better than a crummy port any day.

GOT GAME?

Although *Unreal II* appeared as a dull port on the Xbox it did have one feature in its favour – the multiplayer game. Playing much like *Wolfenstein* or *Team Fortress Classic* it featured character classes, objectives and the like. The only multiplayer (split-screen, link and Live) games confirmed so far for *Liandri* are basic Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture The Flag. While we don't expect full-on team games like those found in *Unreal II* we hope that Epic can come up with a few more original ideas than this before *Unreal Championship 2* is released… if only for competition's sake – after all, this is going to be on the shelves a little before *Halo 2*. Good news, though – there's talk of a four-player split-screen mode. Keep your fingers crossed.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Epic Games
RELEASE: Q4 '04 (US: Nov '04)
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-8

A new version of stunning team-based PC shooter *Unreal II* is the first game from Epic under the Microsoft banner.

"ON THE PC THE UNREAL BRAND HAS ALWAYS STOOD FOR QUALITY. HOWEVER, ON THE XBOX ALL WE'VE HAD SO FAR ARE A COUPLE OF VERY LAZY PORTS"

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

XBOX

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ The name Epic now means one thing and one thing only – *Unreal*. This includes the *Unreal* game engine which is licensed out to countless companies. Amazingly, Epic began in 1991 developing PC shareware games such as *Jazz Jackrabbit*, *Extreme Pinball* and *Jill Of The Jungle*.

HISTORY

- **UNREAL II** 2004 [PC]
- **UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP** 2002 [PC]
- **UNREAL** 1998 [PC]



■ With stunning visuals like this it's no wonder the game only supports eight players on Xbox Live.





"SPECTACULAR NEW ADRENALINE POWERS ENABLE NEW OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE COMBOS"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

■ There are some ridiculously large guns in this game, and yes, before you ask, size does matter.

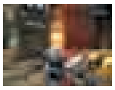
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

GUNS, LOTS OF GUNS... AND SOME FISTICUFFS



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

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UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP (XBOX)

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SOUL CALIBUR II

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UNREAL

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THE LONG-RUNNING FIGHTER BORROWS IDEAS…

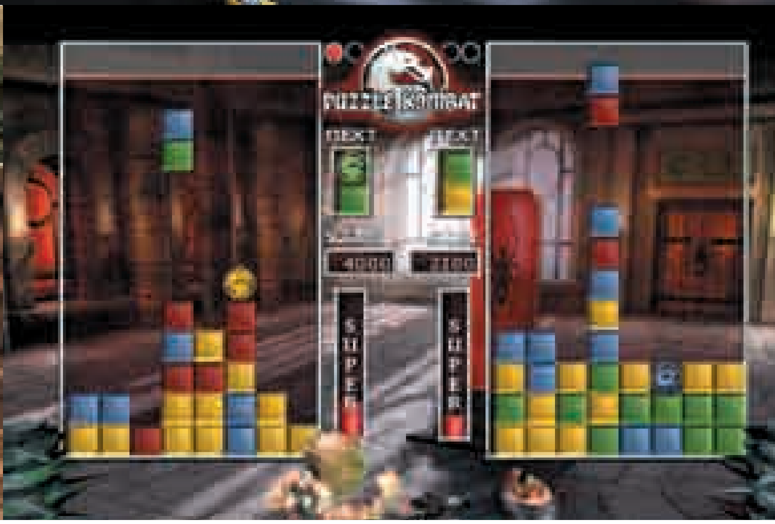
MORTAL KOMBAT + DEAD OR ALIVE 3 + PUZZLE FIGHTER = MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

> **"ANYTHING THAT IS LEANING TOWARDS REALITY WE KIND OF STEER AWAY FROM. WE'RE MORE ABOUT THE UNBELIEVABLE"**
>
> *ED BOON, CREATOR, MORTAL KOMBAT*

■ The unmistakable *Mortal Kombat* style is still here, but the content's a little different…



■ Can't be bothered to show off your martial arts prowess? Chop him up with an axe, then.



MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

PLAYSTATION2/MULTIFORMAT

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Originally a producer of arcade machines, Midway has some of the more recognisable franchises in videogames. There are few who won't know the names *SpyHunter, Defender, Area51, NARC, Gauntlet* and (of course) *Mortal Kombat*, all of which have either been remade for the next generation or are in development now.

HISTORY

- **SPYHUNTER 2** 2004 [Multi]
- **NHL HITZ PRO** 2003 [Multi]
- **MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE** 2003 [Multi]

THE FIGHTING GAME THAT GOES AFTER YOUR HEART

PS2 **The appearance of a new *Mortal Kombat* game is pretty much inevitable in the beat-'em-up genre.** But given the lukewarm reception of last year's *Deadly Alliance* you might think Midway is planning some kind of major overhaul with *Deception*. Certainly, it might not have had a 'back to the drawing board' redesign, but the series has had a major kick up the backside – every section of this game has been reworked and tweaked to incorporate new ideas or answer the fans' requests.

The biggest improvements are the new features in the arenas. They include weapons that can be picked up (in addition to the weapons each character holds already) and interactive scenery that can bring an untimely end to a battle. However, these differ from the Pit Fatalities (which are still here) because, in theory, they let you end a fight in one blow – for example, by knocking your opponent into a makeshift blending machine (subtlety still isn't one of *Mortal Kombat*'s strong points. Many of the stages are now tiered, meaning you can hurl your opponent through walls, off ledges and the like; hardly original in the wake of *Dead Or Alive*, but it sits well with the violent theme of *Mortal Kombat*.

At the heart of the over-the-top violence you have the Fatalities. With these being the series' selling point for many, the trick has been for Midway to come up with new and interesting death scenes while retaining the trademark tongue-in-cheek humour. Thankfully, everything seems to have gone swimmingly; for instance, Scorpion can now rip the arms off an enemy before beating them to death with the soggy ends. Each character has two fatalities and can even use a Hari Kari move when the infamous 'Finish Him' pops up in their opponent's favour. Learn the Hari Kari and you can prevent your enemy from having the last word by spilling your own innards onto the floor instead of letting them do it for you.

And with 24 characters in the game, that's a whole lot of Fatalities to remember. Although the final list hasn't been confirmed, Midway has promised that there will be six characters from *Deadly Alliance*, six classics (like Nightwolf), six regulars (Scorpion and friends) and six newcomers – plenty to keep you occupied. But there's also one more fighter – one you create yourself. Rather than run a boring fight-by-fight system with some training thrown in for the main one-player mode, Midway has made the surprising choice to include a full RPG. Depending on how you play through this adventure your character's appearance, fighting style, weapons, special moves and so on will change. Once you've finished the game, this custom character is then added to your roster. Whether you can hold more than one of these at any one time remains to be seen, but it's a welcome addition nonetheless.

And still it goes on – in addition to all this, there are several 'bonus' games that only serve to add to the action, such as *Puzzle Kombat* (a violent version of *Puzzle Fighter* with special moves and Fatalities) and *Kombat Chess* (a Stratego-type game where taking your opponent's pieces requires single rounds of fighting). Both of these are highly addictive and more than just a distraction from the main event. We'd almost go so far as to say there's something to please everyone here, but then *Mortal Kombat* isn't exactly a family game, is it?

"SUBTLETY IS STILL NOT ONE OF MORTAL KOMBAT'S STRONG POINTS"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Nov '04 (US: 12 Oct)
GENRE: Beat-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ The classic blood-filled beat-'em-up reborn yet again with loads of new features, mini-games and full online compatibility.

GET OVER HERE

It's questionable whether uniting *Mortal Kombat* fans is a good idea, but both Xbox and PlayStation2 versions of this game are online compatible. So far, the only competition in this department comes from *Capcom VS SNK 2*, and anyone who has tried to play this online will know that it doesn't pose much of a threat. Hopefully, *Deception*'s online play will integrate some kind of ladder and tournament system, allowing people to become the greatest fighter in the world (supposedly). As well as fighting online, you'll also be able to play the puzzle and chess mini-games, features that will no doubt be very welcome after your bloodlust is sated. It certainly seems like Midway wants to provide value for money.



■ The characters still carry one weapon as default but you can now also collect weapons from the arena.



■ Destructible scenery means that scenes like this are going to become very familiar.

CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED

FOUL-MOUTHED, FULLY LOADED AND READY TO WREAK HAVOC ON THE XBOX

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Rare
RELEASE: Q2 '05
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-16

A complete overhaul of Rare's 2001 effort, this game revolves around killing fluffy animals using a potty-mouthed squirrel, his companions and some seriously heavy artillery.

A gobby military squirrel with bazookas, sniper rifles and enormous tanks? Yep, this is the latest offering from the multimillion-pound Microsoft acquisition, Rare. It represents the culmination of almost three years' work… and it won't be out until the middle of 2005. Surely the publisher should be learning a few linguistic lessons from Conker himself and asking Rare what the f**k is going on?

Accusations that Rare simply couldn't cut it on the Xbox have been bandied about, especially after the company was alarmingly silent at this year's Game Developers' Conference. Four months later, however, *Conker: Live And Reloaded* has blown these spurious taunts out of the water with a new look and a determination to become one of the the finest Xbox titles ever made.

That's right. We've all seen how lovely *Halo 2* looks, how goddam fast *RalliSport Challenge 2* hurtles players through insanely detailed circuits, and how ferocious *Star Wars: Republic Commando* promises to be. However, *Live And Reloaded* really does push the Xbox to its limits, and some of the features in the game need to be seen to be believed. Visually, *Conker* is stunning (these screens all use the in-game engine). Even the trailer – a hilarious spoof of *The Terminator* – is extremely slick, making Ridley Scott's *Driv3r* teasers look like the work of a bumbling amat3ur. However, beneath the shiny surface there is much more to the vastly improved *Conker* than meets the eye.

The game was always going to be an Xbox remake of the original, which was released to critical acclaim at the end of the N64's lifespan. This means a return for all the unashamedly adult content that made gamers giggle, including an opera-singing poo and the Horny Bees. It also spells a comeback for violence that would make Tarantino blush and language that makes the new D12 album seem like easy listening. Don't be fooled by how cute the little fella looks, or the fact that he's at war with a race known as the Tediz, *Conker* has '18 certificate' stamped all over it.

The action harks towards the bloodiest that the Xbox has to offer, and the single-player campaign is a trek through the original *Bad Fur Day*. However, multiplayer is where *Conker* pulls away from the pack, as the online options are guaranteed to make your bandwidth bulge. Sixteen-player support is promised, and the number of innovative modes is phenomenal. Examples of online features include Heist – where players have to combine the abilities of different character classes to rob a bank before the opposing team – and Alien Base, where one team attempts to storm the opposition's stronghold in a manner similar to the Beach Invasion map from *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

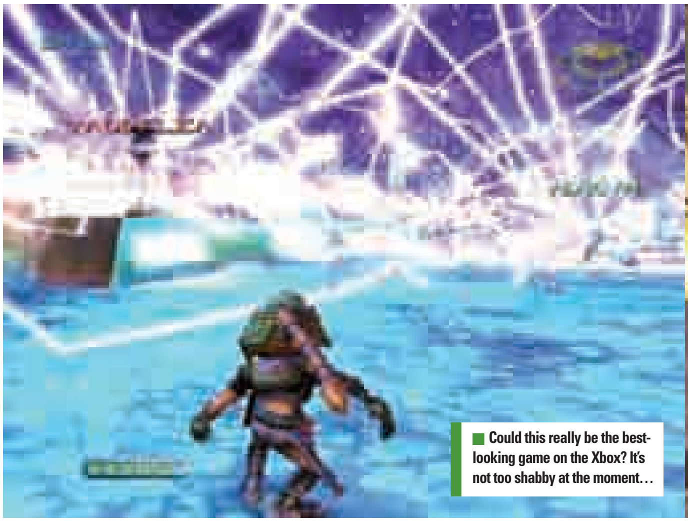
Teamwork is definitely the order of the day, as *Conker* promises to be much more than a shooter with a deathmatch slapped on the side. The game will be the first to offer online campaigns, each with their own separate levels, cut-scenes and storylines, that will allow gamers to team up and work together via broadband. Rankings will be enabled, secrets unlockable, and new items available for download after players finish the missions.

Set a date in your diary, because this game will change the way you think about the Xbox, online gaming and squirrels.

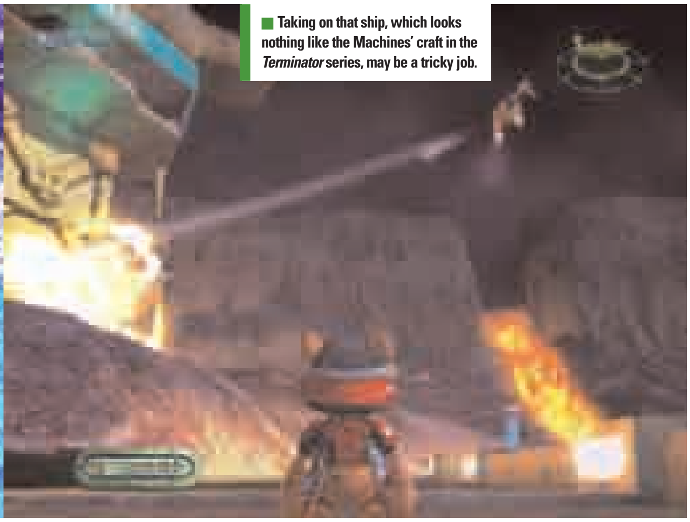
GAME OF GAMES?

Humour is the driving force behind *Conker: Live And Reloaded*, and Rare is intent on weaving its magic to get some belly laughs. The moments of comedy range from foul-mouthed gags through to pastiches of the world's best-loved film and game franchises. Where else will you find a squirrel handling a Lightsaber while dressed as a Jedi? And there are few who won't notice the similarities between Master Chief's Warthog and one of the game's vehicles. We've been promised some very exciting surprises, a few of which were in the E3 demo. But as the game is a work in progress, we can't reveal those. Sorry.

> "LIVE AND RELOADED SPELLS A COMEBACK FOR VIOLENCE THAT WOULD MAKE TARANTINO BLUSH AND LANGUAGE THAT MAKES D12 SOUND LIKE EASY LISTENING"



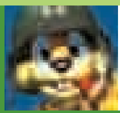
Could this really be the best-looking game on the Xbox? It's not too shabby at the moment…



Taking on that ship, which looks nothing like the Machines' craft in the *Terminator* series, may be a tricky job.

CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED

XBOX



PROFANITY PROFILE

■ The first game to include foul language (albeit in an alien tongue) was arcade classic *Q*Bert*, which appeared in 1982. More recently, potty-mouthed behaviour has become common in the likes of *The Suffering* and *Manhunt*, though expletive-spitting squirrel Conker may just top their sweary antics.

HISTORY

- **THE SUFFERING** 2004 [Multi]
- **CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY** 2001 [N64]
- **Q*BERT** 1982 [Arcade]



"THE WARFARE PROMISES TO DELIVER THE NON-STOP ACTION, HUMOUR, GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE AND INNUENDO CONKER IS FAMOUS FOR"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BAD-ASSED FUR DAY

CUTE ANIMALS x VIOLENCE + SWEARING = CONKER: LAR



■ Dropping in under cover of night using a parachute is a tried-and-tested tactic of war. Just try to keep Conker's Tourette's under control.



■ The plucky little rodent will face off against all manner of cute yet evil foes.

SID MEIER'S PIRATES!





■ Sailing and sea warfare – how you'll be spending most of your pirate life, linking the sections together.



■ "You are without a doubt the worst pirate I've ever heard of." "Ah, but you have heard of me." And so on.

"THE NEW PIRATES! CARRIES ON WITH THE GREAT GAMEPLAY AND DESIGN SIMPLICITY TRADITION OF THE AWARD-WINNING ORIGINAL"

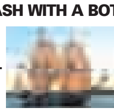
ATARI PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BUCKLING SWASH WITH A BOTTLE OF RUM


PIRATES

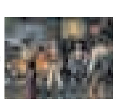
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SAILING

×


MULTIPLE PATHS

=


SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

DEVELOPER PROFILE

Firaxis Games was founded in 1996 and has developed nine games in eight years, including the Sid Meier titles *Alpha Centauri*, *Civilization III* and *SimGolf*. Firaxis also owns the IP rights to other Sid Meier franchises such as *Colonization!*, *Gunship* and *F15 Strike Eagle*.

HISTORY

- **CIVILIZATION III** 2003 [PC]
- **SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI** 1999 [PC]
- **SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!** 1997 [PC]



Fighting moves include slashes, thrusts and parries, all complete with suitably camp animation.



Dancing with the governor's daughter is a fitting end to a day of battling bloodthirsty, growling ruffians.

SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER HER MAIDEN VOYAGE, PIRATES! RETURNS WITH EVEN MORE GROG…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Firaxis Games
RELEASE: TBC (US: Q4 '04)
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

The update to *Pirates!* will combine sailing, swashbuckling and other piratical activities following a lengthy hiatus for the loveable, unshaven rogues.

Pirates – they came, they saw, they conquered the videogame world and then they disappeared. Conspicuous by their absence, the ocean outlaws haven't captured gamers' hearts since *Pirates!* enchanted gamers with its combination of genres and grand vision of a buccaneer's adventures back in 1987. Hoping to recapture that magic, Sid Meier is updating his classic so it's once again a sprawling adventure that hops between genres without nailing its flag to any particular mast. Sailing, fighting and recruiting will all play a big part in your piratical adventures, not to mention jailbreaks, romancing, forging alliances and treasure hunting.

Before you begin life as a pirate, you need to decide upon your nationality and pirate forte, ranging from swashbuckling technique to sailing ability. Dressing up in suitably roguish attire is also important and swords, spyglasses, hats and coats improve your attack and defence abilities in traditional RPG fashion. During your travels you'll also pick up unique items such as morale-boosting fiddles and telescopes that improve your vision at sea.

Eventually, you'll come across hostile ships and this is when your combat abilities will be called into action. You can fire three types of shot against the enemy, which target different parts of the vessel such as the hull or the crew. Firing down the length of the ship will cause more damage, so clever positioning and shot selection is needed for the best results. Add other factors such as accompanying fleets and Indian war canoes (only deployed if you convince the locals to join you) and it's clear that there should be enough depth in the combat alone to satisfy rookie buccaneers.

Scramble aboard the enemy ship and you can engage its captain in close-quarter combat while your crew fight alongside you. How well they fight depends on morale (cleverly monitored by keeping the gold-to-crew ratio in check), but your own fight is in your hands. Fencing moves, such as slashes, parries and thrusts, are available via the number pad as you try to force the advantage. The ship can be used as well – swing on ropes for more momentum and you gain an extra attack. And duelling isn't limited to ship decks, as you can capture forts and towns using a force made up of buccaneers (long-range troops using rifles) and pirates (melee troops with swords). Whittle down the defences and you can duel with the fort commander, with victory leading to a successful fort capture.

After each victorious battle, you're given the chance to retire. If you do hang up your pirate hat, your score is calculated by your ranks, romantic encounters and gold, with the final score given as a post-pirate profession. Should you lose, however, you get thrown in prison. The biggest enemy you face isn't death or another pirate captain (although Firaxis will include a central villain to provide structure) but time. Your skills deteriorate with age and being stuck behind bars for up to six months wastes valuable time. Jailbreaks are possible and introduce an element of stealth that wasn't present in the original, hopefully adding up to a diverse and enjoyable experience.

With no multiplayer available, *Pirates!* will rely on strong community and flexible customisation to enhance the replay value. So long as it lives up to its promises and 1987 namesake, there'll be plenty for gamers to get their grog-stained teeth into.

PIRATE POLITICS

Your first task is to pick your nationality. While only being able to choose English, French, Spanish or Dutch suggests cultural elitism, these choices reflect the 'pirating' nations. Spaniards, for example, will find it easier to dominate the early piracy era while later years prove more difficult as Spanish influence wanes. Regardless of nationality, you can earn fame as a buccaneer and the game responds appropriately. Governors will give you a chance to become a privateer, or offer sword practice if you keep losing duels. You can also strike up alliances with other pirate captains. These options let you develop your character into a charming anti-hero or more of an evil Long John Silver type.

"IT'S CLEAR THAT THERE SHOULD BE ENOUGH DEPTH IN THE COMBAT ALONE TO SATISFY ROOKIE BUCCANEERS"

AMAZING ISLAND



NEVER HAS A TITLE BEEN QUITE THIS ACCURATE

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: Hitmaker
RELEASE: Q3 '04
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ Create your own creatures from scratch then train them and enter them into battles and mini-games. Think *Pokémon* meets Etch-A-Sketch…

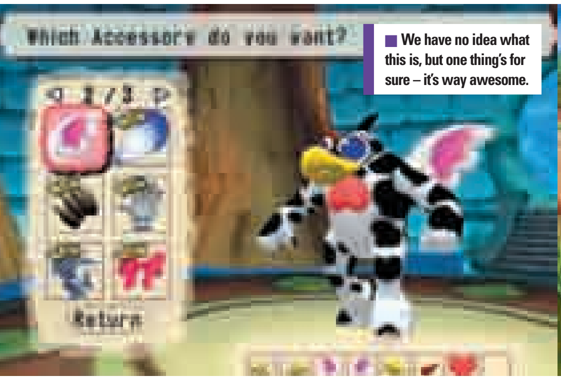
You can always rely on SEGA to think not just outside the box but pretty much outside of geometry in general. After offering *Billy Hatcher* and *P.N.O3* exclusively to GameCube owners (and then announcing some time ago that many new releases would be multiformat) you'd imagine that the Japanese firm would be looking to spread its catalogue as widely as possible. But if you were to scan a SEGA release schedule, you'd be hard pressed to find a more 'appropriate' title for release on the Nintendo console.

The closest relation you'll find to *Amazing Island* is Garakuta Studio's *Magic Pengel: The Quest For Colour*, an RPG where you use a simple paint program to create 'Doodles' that come to life and battle by your side. *Amazing Island* takes the emphasis away from combat and places it on a selection of quirky mini-games more akin to something like *Mario Party*, also allowing much more personalisation of your created freak with all manner of accessories and body parts, including some from more familiar SEGA characters. There are in the region of 30 events planned to keep things suitably varied and, as you might expect, performing well in these unlocks a host of new body parts and items with which to decorate the (usually bizarre) result of your artistic endeavours.

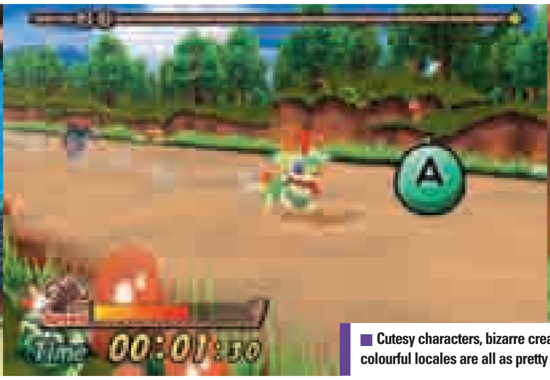
> "DID YOU EVER LOOK AT A POKÉMON AND THINK 'I COULD DO BETTER'? PROVE IT…"

More interesting, perhaps, is SEGA's continuing support for the oft-forgotten ideal of connectivity. You'll be able to download your creation to your Game Boy Advance to train and compete further, and unlock a selection of link-only goodies, before transferring it back to the big screen and continuing the unconventional adventure.

To call *Amazing Island* slightly quirky is like calling the Pope a bit holy. This is not the kind of game that will light up the charts nor is it the kind that will soon find its mantelpiece overflowing with awards. It is, however, another brave move on SEGA's part and one that we can't wait to try out first-hand, especially given the huge amount of multiplayer fun we've had over the last year with the likes of *Super Monkey Ball 2* and *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*. Hopefully, *Amazing Island* will capture the same SEGA magic in both single- and multiplayer modes as this sounds like an extremely interesting idea.



■ We have no idea what this is, but one thing's for sure – it's way awesome.





■ Cutesy characters, bizarre creatures and colourful locales are all as pretty as you'd expect.

eMag

KINGDOM HEARTS II

SO VIBRANT, ONLY THE TRULY HEARTLESS COULD RESIST…

PS2 **There's no need to feel guilty if you're a *Kingdom Hearts* fan – you're certainly not alone.** In fact, you're just one of four million card-carrying *Kingdom Hearts* aficionados scattered around the globe. Its mix of real-time battles, simplistic platforming and RPG-lite elements were perfectly offset by a rollicking quest; the potentially saccharine tweeness of Disney and Square Enix's bug-eyed cast balanced by the game's almost depressingly dark themes.

Unsurprisingly, then, *Kingdom Hearts II* further explores that remit. Mysterious cowled figures provide an oppressive air seemingly at odds with the delightfully detailed characters with whom they share the screen. The celebration of all characters Disney also continues unabated with Mickey Mouse taking more of a starring role, though whether it'll be the chirpy rodent we're all familiar with remains to be seen – his hooded attire suggests otherwise. Director Tetsuya Nomura has conjured up some startling new character designs that are much more intriguing than the increasingly youthful, Aryan characters synonymous with *Final Fantasy*.

Set a year after *Kingdom Hearts*' quest, Sora is once again the main protagonist ably (or perhaps not so ably) assisted by Goofy and Donald Duck in his search for his friends Riku and Kairi, who were lost during the first game. The shadowy Heartless, or a new strain thereof, reprise their villainous roles, while a new masked figure looks to take on the overlord mantle. We wouldn't be shocked if Riku proves to be a thorn in Sora's side again either.

The original game's most notable aspect, and the one ripest for improvement, is its real-time fighting system. The turn-based RPG battle-inspired menu system is once again flavour of the month for selecting spells, items and attacks, while the addition of a Drive meter situated next to the health and magic bars suggests a subtle reworking – most probably in the form of a Limit Break-style attack. The familiar PS2 button symbols are also hovering over certain enemies, perhaps signifying a directional-combat element, and unless Sora has learned how to fly, combat looks to take a few stylistic cues from the likes of *Devil May Cry*, with our hero looking particularly suited to mid-air swordplay (well, Keybladeplay anyway).

The Keyblade, of course, was a, er, key plot device – acting not only as a weapon, but a method of sealing off a world from the threat of the marauding Heartless – and it makes a welcome return. You can also expect to revisit the old roster of Disney franchise-specific lands; glimpses of Hercules, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast and the Little Mermaid almost guarantee as much, while new environments include a Moroccan-looking mountainside town and a Hobbit-style dwelling rendered with dazzling finesse, though how your party will make their way to such locations is a mystery.

Of potentially greater intrigue is the presence of a second Keyblade wielder and his own party of friends. Furthermore, Sora's sailor-esque outfit is history, replaced with natty black threads; a degree of costume characterisation will be permitted, but whether each will boast its own unique characteristics or is simply an aesthetic alteration remains to be seen.

For anyone who's ever dismissed a Disney-licensed game, this could be quite an eye-opener.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

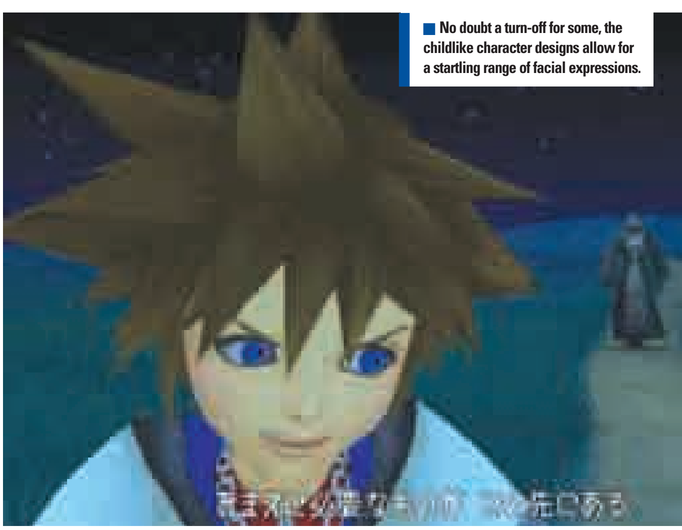
One element of the original *Kingdom Hearts*, and perhaps its weakest, that is absent so far is the Gummi Ship that was used to ferry Sora and co from world to world. It was a neat concept, especially as the ship could be redesigned and upgraded with all manner of fancy parts found on your quest. Sadly, it was hamstrung by pedestrian shooting (it was possible to set your ship in the middle of the screen and get to your destination without touching the joypad – so much for 'hostile' enemies) and primitive presentation – a throwback to the game's PSone development. Its absence hints at either a new way of travelling between worlds or a major overhaul. Either is fine with us.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Square Enix
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

■ Like a videogame interpretation of *Alice In Wonderland*, this RPG encompasses Disney franchises as diverse as *Beauty And The Beast*, *The Little Mermaid* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

"COMBAT LOOKS TO TAKE A FEW STYLISTIC CUES FROM THE LIKES OF DEVIL MAY CRY, WITH SORA LOOKING PARTICULARLY SUITED TO MID-AIR SWORDPLAY"



■ **No doubt a turn-off for some, the childlike character designs allow for a startling range of facial expressions.**



■ **In the finest Square Enix tradition, this chap sports a unique hairstyle and boasts a suitably intimidating incendiary attack.**

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Square Enix is the final word when it comes to Japanese RPGs, boasting both the *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* series in its portfolio of videogaming's most popular franchises, commanding total sales of 45 million and 30 million units respectively.

HISTORY

- **FINAL FANTASY X-2** 2004 [PS2]
- **FINAL FANTASY X** 2002 [PS2]
- **KINGDOM HEARTS** 2002 [PS2]



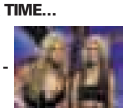
"OUR DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CREATING A NEW CHAPTER IN KINGDOM HEARTS' HISTORY"
TETSUYA NOMURA, DIRECTOR, SQUARE ENIX

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

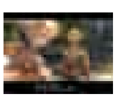
ONCE UPON A TIME…


THE MICKEY MOUSE CLUB

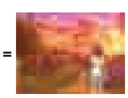
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BRITNEY AND CHRISTINA

x


FINAL FANTASY XII

=


KINGDOM HEARTS II



■ This masked figure promises to play a major, and no doubt nefarious, role in proceedings.



■ Moments like this perfectly capture the spirit of the *Kingdom Hearts* series. At once awe-inspiring and yet equally ludicrous.

eMag

ROCKY LEGENDS





Boxing is not a subtle sport, so thrash your opponent until he can no longer stand.



The game lets you play as every figure from the much-loved *Rocky* film series.

THE SECOND UNLIKELY COMEBACK…

PS2 ***Rocky* is one of the best-loved boxing franchises ever.** The film may not have had the savagery of *Raging Bull* or the blackittude of *Ali*, but Stallone's pugilist flick made a huge impact back in the Eighties. As with most popular films, it spawned a game (in 2002) that became a surprise favourite with many ring-side enthusiasts. Fast forward to 2004 and it seems that Rocky is making one of his many comebacks, only this time Ubisoft is the trainer bringing the Italian Stallion to the console match-up.

The truth is that you can't keep a decent franchise down and the game looks likely to pull off a remarkable victory for the ageing licence, in the same way that in the later films Rocky would come from behind to emerge as world champion (again). Indeed, Ubisoft must be drooling with anticipation after the success enjoyed by EA's recent boxing sim, *Fight Night*. Add a beloved film licence to an already popular genre and even a brain-mashed boxer will be able to predict the outcome.

Developed by Venom Games, *Legends* features an all-new career mode that allows players to step back in time from the movies to mould the way their favourite boxers emerge onto the scene. That's right, 'boxers' plural, as *Legends* lets you choose from either Rocky himself, Ivan Drago, Clubber Lang or Apollo Creed in the Career mode. Apollo, for example, starts as a punchy kid with a massive afro and works his way up to world champion with a slightly more controlled afro…

However, if you've played the original *Rocky* and still think that the Career mode doesn't warrant your cash, then *Legends* has more than its fair share of additions. There are now 40 opponents (a total of 26 new boxers in all), so you'll be able to play for hours and never have to pummel the same face twice. There are also a host of new venues, eight special training modes, and multiplayer options on- and offline. Offline, players can fight and train together in a sort of co-operative style, but online the competition will be fierce. Not only is 'deathmatch' promised (we assume no-one actually dies), but online rankings, leagues and match-ups are on the cards.

You may want to keep one good eye open for *Rocky Legends*…

"THE CLICHÉS ARE TRUE – YOU CAN'T KEEP A DECENT FRANCHISE DOWN"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Venom Games
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-2

The man himself returns to punch his way through a complete career of hard-hitting pugilism.



If in doubt, go for the ear. Bite a chunk out of this fella and he'll whine like a girl.

TRIBES: VENGEANCE



"IN TRIBES: VENGEANCE GAMERS BECOME IMMERSED IN A ROILING SPACE OPERA"
VU GAMES PRESS RELEASE

■ Being a gunner in this enormous dropship you should be able to rack up the kills quickly.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS
THE FUTURE OF FPS ACTION



GUNS + THE FUTURE + PLOT = TRIBES: VENGEANCE



■ As this is the first *Tribes* single-player game, try to avoid skipping the cut-scenes.



■ The shooting part of the game looks remarkably like the *Unreal* series. Funny that.

TRIBES: VENGEANCE
PC

DEVELOPER PROFILE
Irrational Games has been an inconsistent player in the games market so far. Having enjoyed relative success with *Freedom Force* and *System Shock 2* the company attempted a home console game, *The Lost*, which never made it to the shelves as planned in 2003. *Tribes: Vengeance* is only the company's fourth game.

HISTORY
- **FREEDOM FORCE** 2002 [PC]
- **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** 1999 [PC]
- **THE LOST** UNRELEASED [Multi]

WHEN TWO TRIBES GO TO WAR (AGAIN)

Let's forget for a second that most people have, at some point, encountered the first-person squad-action-fest that is *Tribes*. For the uninitiated, all you really need to know is that it's a little like feudal Japan, only in space… and powered by the *Unreal* engine… oh, and with vehicles. Well, perhaps not too much like feudal Japan, but in the sense that the Empire is fighting a lengthy war against the Tribes it's similar to the period of Japanese history made famous by Kurosawa and, more recently, Tom Cruise. Established *Tribes* fans will be nodding their heads knowingly, but will undoubtedly be anxious to know what *Vengeance* has to offer.

The war has been waging for what seems like an eternity, but now you, the player, will be offered a chance to discover the truth about the conflict and to break free from the cycle that keeps the powers at each others' throats. Irrational Games is keeping the plot tightly under wraps, but does describe the title as 'a space opera', giving a real impression that there will be plenty of emotion poured into the game (as seems to be the trend nowadays with such titles as *Brothers In Arms* and the new *Silent Hill*). The way *Tribes: Vengeance* will differ from the usual space-based linear experience is that it will offer the PC owner a chance to see the intricacies of the game's plot and history from the viewpoints of different characters. By the end of the single-player campaign players should be able to piece together a storyline from these snatches of narrative that will shed light on the roots of the *Tribes* series.

> "EVERYTHING ABOUT THE GAME SPELLS OUT A MUCH LARGER EXPERIENCE THAN ANY OTHER BEFORE IT"

This comes as no surprise, however, as *Vengeance* is the first single-player version of the game and, as such, allows greater insight into the world that is portrayed. The game centres on various members of two generations of a family who are at war, giving the title a real sense of space and time. In fact, everything about the game spells out a much larger experience than any other before it. The multiplayer will make an incredibly welcome return, and will allow 32 players the chance to scrap it out for possession of the whole *Tribes* world.

To accommodate this, the game engine borrows an enhanced version of Epic's nigh-on universal *Unreal* engine to power the intense combat, guaranteeing a game that will stand shoulder to shoulder with the best of today's online FPS titles. Much like Gearbox's *Brothers In Arms*, the facial expressions of other characters will create the emotional thrust of the game, making *Vengeance* a much more believable fantasy world for fans of the series to get their teeth into.

Having crammed so much into such a varied game, Irrational Games will be extremely cautious about ensuring that it all slots together neatly. The team has developed an entirely new physics and movement system to cater for the wide variety of abilities that the average player will get to grips with in the single- and multiplayer side of the game, allowing activities such as jet-packing, aircraft piloting and skiing to exist side by side in the varied locations. Imagine being able to ski down the side of a mountain while firing weapons at pursuing foes, much like a futuristic James Bond.

With all that's being promised for *Tribes* this could become a reality, even if skiing down bobsleigh runs may not be a feature in the finished game…

HAPPY 100TH GAME!
***Tribes: Vengeance*, in addition to being a fantastic-looking game in its own right, has a special claim to fame – it's officially the hundredth game to license Havok's legendary physics engine for its FPS needs. The Havok 2 engine has been used in some of the top games of all time, including recent hits *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Max Payne 2*. Interestingly, *Vengeance* also uses a modified version of Epic's *Unreal* engine, the source of the first-person elements in almost every top shooter on any format, making this as hardcore and pure an FPS title as you could hope to own, without the demand of excessive processing power.**

DETAILS
FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: VU Games
DEVELOPER: Irrational Games
RELEASE: TBC
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-32

The futuristic world of *Tribes* continues to develop with an all-new single- and multiplayer first-person shooter.



The levels look epic, as is the trend for today's discerning first-person shooter.



Online play has been touted at 32 players at once – just the right size for a decent bloodbath.

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

TIME FOR A RARE TREAT

Rare's reputation for its 'unhurried' approach to games is well known in the industry, but when *Kameo* first appeared at X02, many people raised their eyebrows at what seemed like a lazily converted N64 title. Now, two years later, *Elements Of Power* has appeared again and is looking much better, thank you, perhaps proving that slow and steady really does win the race.

It may seem a little unfair to have dismissed the game so swiftly after its announcement, but factors such as confusion surrounding the gameplay, as well as the title's last-generation look, tended to compel critics and gamers to shun poor old *Kameo* in favour of *Grabbed By The Ghoulies* and scraps of information about *Perfect Dark Zero*. Hopefully for Rare, the new look and plenty of playable content (to help explain *Kameo*'s baffling concepts) may rekindle interest in this quirky title.

Speaking to Rare at E3, it was obvious that *Kameo* is going to be one of its typically magical titles – a colourful yet universally appealing adventure; indeed, the story could have been lifted clean out of classic fantasy tales and age-old folklore. Kameo and her sister, Kalus, are summoned by their mother, the queen, to discuss who will become defender of the realm in her place. Being older, Kalus assumes it will be her, but instead Kameo is appointed. The jealous type, Kalus swears revenge, resurrects the Troll King, Thorn, and kidnaps the queen and her Elemental Warriors. This is where you come in.

Kameo: Elements Of Power is a bright and beautiful game, and Rare has implemented many elements that keep the game simple and accessible. Kameo herself has several moves, enabling her to jump to and destroy parts of her environment – the bare essentials for an action adventure title. However, the bulk of the game centres on the ten Elemental Warriors that Kameo collects during her travels. Each Warrior allows Kameo to take their form, and therefore use their specific special abilities. Each is assigned to the A, B, X and Y buttons, allowing rapid access for players when they're solving puzzles or fighting fantasy creatures.

In fact, the game is more about solving puzzles and navigating tricky sections by using the Elemental Warriors' talents. A demo of the game showed a seemingly impassable gateway through which the player was required to travel. Switching to Chilla, a yeti-style creature, Kameo threw an ice javelin at the lock on the gate – raising it slightly from the floor. Then our heroine became Pummel Weed, a strange, plant-like creature with boxing gloves, who was able to squeeze through the gap. A simple puzzle but an effective way of demonstrating the sort of gameplay around which *Kameo* revolves.

Obviously, different combinations of Warriors will be required to progress, and we already know that in addition to the two mentioned there is an armadillo-type creature and a fire-breathing dragon. Judging by Rare's track record, we're willing to bet that the conundrums start to become insanely tricky as the game progresses, so expect the weirdness and effectiveness of Kameo's various forms to follow suit.

It's safe to assume that *Kameo* will be one of the most original games on Xbox, if nothing else. However, looking at Rare's reworked games at E3 it seems that the developer is settling into the hardware, so expect it to go from strength to strength.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Something that *Kameo* has in spades is choice. The game seeks to allow players the chance to find their own particular style of play; therefore, each of the puzzles and enemies that the player encounters will offer several possibilities about how they are handled. Often the choice will be between tackling the obstacle head-on, or finding some way to use the scenery to your advantage. There will even be alternative ways to beat the bosses, making *Kameo* an incredibly diverse and exciting prospect.

"THE STORY COULD HAVE BEEN LIFTED CLEAN OUT OF CLASSIC FANTASY TALES AND FOLKLORE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Rare
RELEASE: Q2 '05
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Rare's fairy-tale adventure game places puzzling and choice ahead of all-out action and complex controls.

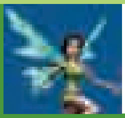




Kameo herself is looking much more up-to-date and less like a Nintendo character.

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

XBOX



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Rare is one of the UK's premier developers, and in 2002 it was bought by Microsoft for around £365 million. Since being signed to the Microsoft Games Studio label, it's only produced one game – *Grabbed By The Ghoulies* – but has *Conker: Live And Reloaded* in development.

HISTORY

- **GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES** 2003 (Xbox)
- **BANJO KAZOOIE** 1998 (N64)
- **GOLDENEYE** 1997 (N64)



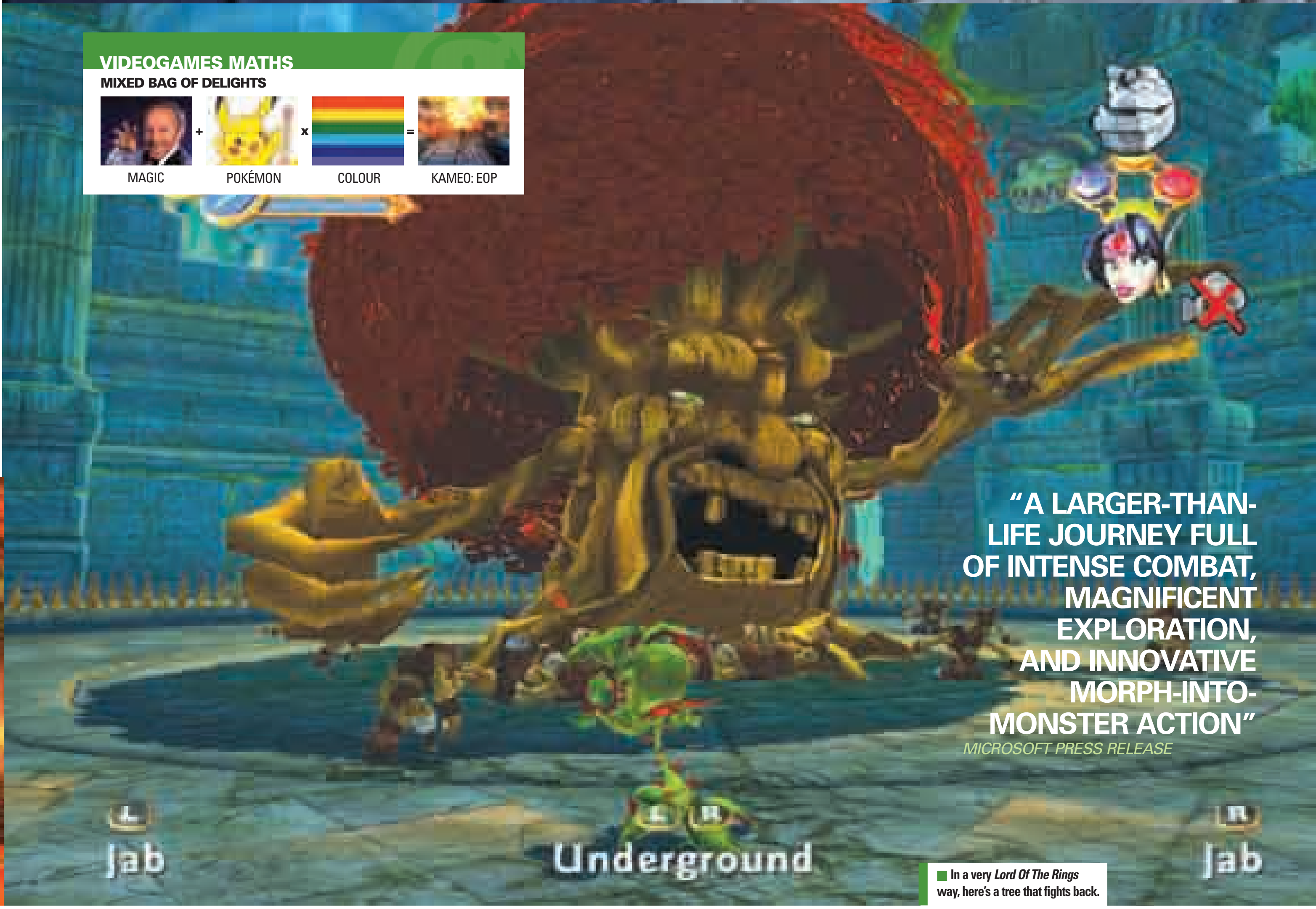


■ Switching between Elemental Warriors during an attack allows the player to rack up huge bonuses.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MIXED BAG OF DELIGHTS

MAGIC + POKÉMON x COLOUR = KAMEO: EOP



"A LARGER-THAN-LIFE JOURNEY FULL OF INTENSE COMBAT, MAGNIFICENT EXPLORATION, AND INNOVATIVE MORPH-INTO-MONSTER ACTION"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

■ In a very *Lord Of The Rings* way, here's a tree that fights back.

TEKKEN 5





New character Raven seems to be the bastard son of Blade and Simon Phoenix from *Demolition Man*.



THE BODYWORK MIGHT LOOK NEW, BUT IT'S SAME OLD MOTOR UNDERNEATH

DETAILS

FORMAT: Arcade, PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Namco
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: July '04 (PS2: Q2 '05)
GENRE: Beat-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

It's another *Tekken* game, but with three new characters, improved visuals and… er, not much else really.

We've been called a lot of things, many of them unprintable in a family publication. But if there's one accusation that we will admit to it's cynicism – maybe we've been doing this too long, but the announcement of some games just doesn't get us as excited as perhaps it should. Take the news that *Tekken 5* is coming to arcades worldwide this summer, and then exclusively to the PS2 in the first half of 2005, for instance. Yes, so it's good news for some but, well, we can't help feeling rather underwhelmed.

That could, of course, be because we've been here so many times before. Ten years since the series began, the fifth King Of The Iron Fist Tournament is upon us and with it comes a slew of prize scrappers, many of whom will be familiar to anyone with any experience with the *Tekken* franchise. From old favourites such Paul Phoenix, Nina Williams and Yoshimitsu to the new and slightly less interesting characters from *Tekken 4*, the only fresh blood comes in the form of three new fighters – Raven, a ninja tough guy; Asuka Kazama, cousin of Jin; and Feng Wei, a mean-looking martial artist with a grudge. This would normally be enough to whet our appetites, but as it appears that all three new characters play a lot like past stars of the series (Bryan Fury, Jun Kazama and Paul Phoenix respectively), we're hardly jumping for joy.

There is some good news, though – having seen the upcoming arcade version first-hand, we are at least impressed that Namco's promises of a brand new graphics engine aren't just puffed-up boasts. The numerous settings look genuinely gorgeous, with some examples – like the moonlit field of knee-high flowers or burning-building arenas – proving particularly memorable. Improvements have also been made to the destructible elements of each stage, with the scenery taking a real beating as you brawl your way around it.

However, while polished visuals are all very well, we've still got concerns about how different *Tekken 5*'s gameplay will prove to be over previous incarnations – particularly as against more realistic 3D beat-'em-ups (specifically *Virtua Fighter*), the series' button-basing, combo-heavy gameplay recently hasn't felt nearly as fulfilling as it should. Whether *Tekken 5* is a success isn't really the issue; it's whether the gameplay can deliver on the promises its visuals make.

> "NAMCO NEEDS TO REFINE THE BUTTON-MASHING GAMEPLAY IF BEAT-'EM-UP FANS ARE TO ENJOY THIS LATEST OUTING"



Does she look familiar? Asuka is the niece of *Tekken 2*'s Jun Kazama and has an almost identical move set.



Tekken 5 features a wide range of locations, all built with the new graphics engine – and don't they look lovely?

eMag

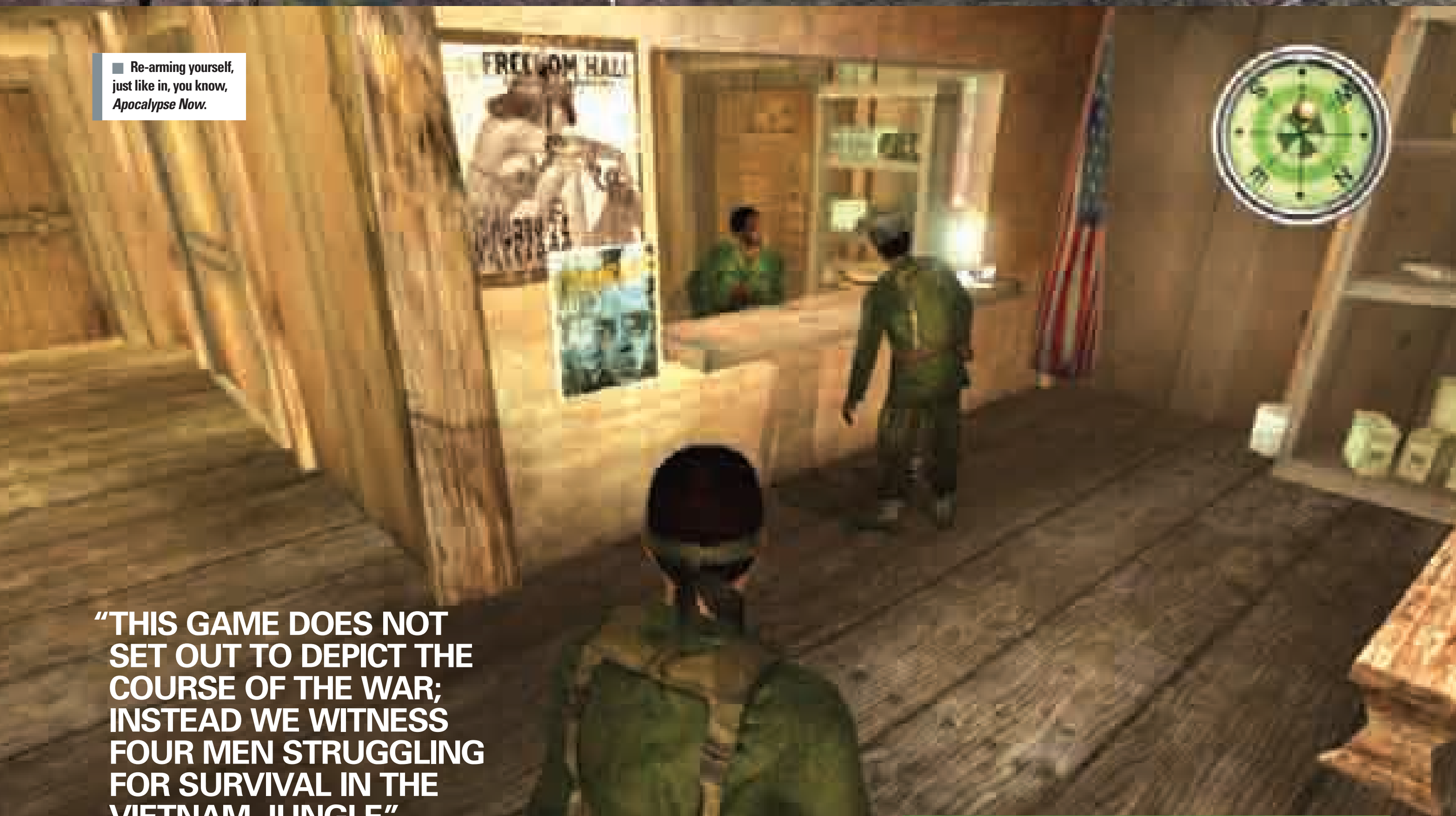
CONFLICT: VIETNAM



Stumbling across flaming carnage in the jungle, just like in *Platoon.*



Walking through hostile terrain, just like in *Hamburger Hill.*



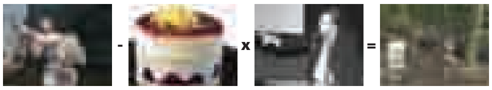
Re-arming yourself, just like in, you know, *Apocalypse Now.*

"THIS GAME DOES NOT SET OUT TO DEPICT THE COURSE OF THE WAR; INSTEAD WE WITNESS FOUR MEN STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL IN THE VIETNAM JUNGLE"

SCI PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THIS IS MY RIFLE, THIS IS MY GUN



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II - DESERT x OLIVER STONE = CONFLICT: VIETNAM

CONFLICT: VIETNAM
XBOX/MULTIFORMAT

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Pivotal Games came to prominence in September 2002 when it released the widely acclaimed *Conflict: Desert Storm*, a game concerning elite US troops shouting really loudly at each other in Iraq. The team has a wide experience of game programming, from *Warzone 2100* on PC and PlayStation to *Zeewolf* on the Amiga.

HISTORY

- **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II** 2003 [Multi]
- **THE GREAT ESCAPE** 2003 [Multi]
- **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM** 2002 [Multi]



■ Fighting in what looks like London's Docklands, just like in *Full Metal Jacket*.

TODAY YOU ARE NO LONGER MAGGOTS. TODAY YOU ARE MARINES

There's still plenty to learn and discuss about America's longest war. Did you know that the same number of conscripted troops were used in World War II? Seventy per cent of Americans killed were volunteers, the average age of the 58,148 US military personal killed was 23, not 19… You will not laugh, you will not cry, you will learn by the numbers – we will teach you. Now get up, get on your feet. You had best un-frug yourself or we will unscrew your head and poop down your neck.

There is no doubt that the war was grim, bloody and, thanks to the technology, particularly cinematic. Vietnam is a byword for technological arrogance, a war that still plagues the American psyche (if such a thing exists) because it was one that they lost. Did they lose? After all, communism didn't sweep through Asia… *Conflict: Vietnam* avoids all problems in describing winning conditions and political complexity since the only victory possible is in your squad's survival. And this is, after all, a game. It's entertainment. It allows you to enjoy the anguish and the ecstasy of being a jolly green giant – with guns.

Following the template set by Pivotal's previous two *Conflict* titles, *Vietnam* puts you in the olive greens of four soldiers who must fight back to their fire-base through 14 missions of enemy territory. Ragman, Junior, Hoss and Cherry are their names, and possessing complementary skills is their game. By controlling one trooper, you can directly command the others, or let artificial intelligence take care of them. A wonderfully ironic description of military leadership under fire? Hopefully not. Current playtests demonstrate that your men are smart enough to look after themselves without you feeling that you're playing a game set to 'automatic'.

Vietnam was the most photographed war in history, a fact that led to folks back home witnessing iconic imagery via TV and newspapers. This has given Pivotal an emotive bank of images, sounds and journalism to work with but it's surely Hollywood movies that are the greatest inspiration. Just as Private Joker's use of John Wayne impersonations in *Full Metal Jacket* demonstrates an ironic, movie-like understanding of what is in store, so *Conflict: Vietnam* sees you in a plastic patrol boat – hey, just like in *Apocalypse Now*. The references are manifold.

The game wears its knowledge of the war's texture like a row of medals. Your grunts will bitch to each other in authentic Marine speak, and there is no holding back on the gore. Tension is kept at a maximum thanks to that trickiest of digital illusions, extreme foliage. Add to this the constant threat of ambush or the booby traps that accounted for 12 per cent of US fatalities and you've got a game filled with harrowing entertainment, a concept that Private Joker himself would find amusing.

Conflict: Vietnam's biggest coup will be in the description of such combat without relying on the usual videogame clichés. Stand-up fights were rare, so any *Halo*-esque engagements – though necessary for the flow of the game – debase the sense of being involved in such an idiosyncratic war. From what we've seen so far, such a balance has yet to be met since the enemy has no qualms about blowing its cover during a firefight, giving your men ample targets to destroy.

Like the war itself, this one will be tricky to pull off convincingly, although thanks to the high quality of previous *Conflict* titles, the campaign for the hearts and minds of gamers has already been won.

CHARLIE DON'T SURF

Just because you play as infantrymen, it doesn't mean you're always going to go on foot. The Vietcong has left behind a variety of vehicles for you to abuse, while the US has discarded plenty of boats, tanks and helicopters fuelled and armed for your delectation. There are gun emplacements too, because this is a military shooter and that's the law. Each vehicle is authentic, no matter how much they may more closely resemble something knocked up on *Scrapheap Challenge*.

"THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF GAMERS HAS ALREADY BEEN WON"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2, GameCube, PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: SCi
DEVELOPER: Pivotal Games
RELEASE: 24 Sept
GENRE: Action Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

■ Vietnam, 1968. Four American soldiers fight for survival as they tab their way back through enemy lines.

NEO CONTRA



The most grotesque boss character ever? Mmm, possibly, but *Neo Contra* bad guys certainly look damn fine.

KONAMI REVISITS GUN 'N' RUN GAMEPLAY ONE MORE TIME

'Neo' – that means 'new', right? So what's new with *Contra*? The series first appeared back when computer power was measured in the number of sprites a game could push, pull and rotate, not in numbers of polygons, and the Neo in question refers to the new camera angle and 3D environment that was, er, last seen in *Contra: Shattered Soldier*. So it's not that new, after all.

To be fair, the game eschews the forced, on-rails movement of the series' last outing on the PlayStation2 and replaces it with a more free-roaming environment. The camera still views the action from above (and sometimes from the side) but levels now contain sections where you can move around *Baldur's Gate*-style. Other levels are on rails, however, so fans shouldn't despair. *Neo Contra* also retains the series' sense of the absurd – one boss fight sees your character running atop the blades of a hovering helicopter while still managing to aim for those flashing weak spots. You should see how fast his little legs run…

Other goodies? Well, the artwork is by Jim Lee (of *Batman* and *Superman* comic-book fame) who has been working closely with the development team to capture the spirit of the old arcade games. The game also features a new Hit Rate system, enabling a more interesting and 'accurate' scoring system that will open up hidden extras depending on how the system is used. Oh, and much of the scenery will be destructible, although this feature appears to be purely aesthetic.

The story follows the exploits of Bill Rizer (yes, him) and introduces a new character – Genbei Jaguar Yagyu, a Samurai. Using markedly different weapons – though we're not entirely sure what weapons a futuristic samurai would use – Konami is touting him as "a whole new way to experience *Contra*". Hmm.

What is certain is that the basic premise of *Contra* is intact – huge, screen-filling bosses; pyrotechnic visual displays; frantic, button-destroying action; the hammy plot and voice acting… For fans of the series, and there remain many, it looks like *Neo Contra* will do no wrong. For anyone else it may be a contradiction of what PlayStation2 is all about.

"FOR FANS OF THE SERIES IT LOOKS LIKE NEO CONTRA WILL DO NO WRONG"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Oct '04
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-2

A return of classic arcade gaming, or old-fashioned shooting from a bygone age?



It's *Contra*, so that means big explosions. Visual flair is kept to a minimum, however, and is mostly reserved for cut-scenes.





Ever wondered what a futuristic samurai looks like? Here's your answer.

eMag

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY



■ You're not wrong there's fear in the air – Starbreeze has created a suitably oppressive and terrifying environment.



■ After the demise of *Friends*, Ugly Naked Guy's career knocked Joey's spin-off sitcom into touch…

THE BEST THING FEATURING VIN DIESEL FOR A LONG TIME

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: Sweden
PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal
DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios
RELEASE: 13 August (US: Out Now)
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1

■ It's not the longest or most complex game in the world, but Riddick's exploits on the Xbox sure do look pretty.

Certain observers say it was the moment Vin Diesel set foot in a modified car for *The Fast And The Furious* that his career began to decline. Others say the rot set in when he slid down a handrail on a tea-tray in *xXx*, while some cruelly point to the whole of *A Man Apart* as proof. In truth, it was a combination of all three – bad decisions to get involved with the wrong film at the wrong time. Yet Diesel's decision to provide voices and allow himself to be motion-captured for *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay* could prove to be his best yet.

Escape From Butcher Bay isn't based on the forthcoming *Pitch Black* sequel but instead takes place before both films, and helps shed some light on the origins of Diesel's character, Riddick. As those who have seen *Pitch Black* will testify, the ending of the film shows Riddick's moral ambiguity and the game looks intent on capturing the same vague ethical boundaries. Indeed, the storyline is initially shrouded in mystery as you don't know why you're being taken to Butcher Bay prison or what role your captor, Johns has to play in proceedings.

Hazy narrative aside, there's no denying the quality of the atmosphere Starbreeze has created; the suffocating, menacing vibe of Butcher Bay is related through a soundtrack of distant screams and nearby threats, while music is kept minimal so the effect isn't diluted. The feeling of claustrophobia is fostered by dynamic lighting, with Riddick's shadow visible, and a contrast between light and dark sections throughout the game.

The actual gameplay sits neatly between a first- and third-person title, mixing FPS and stealth elements to come up with something new. First-person fist fighting is one such element, which is called upon when you haven't got a gun to hand. Although *Breakdown* has beaten *Escape From Butcher Bay* to the punch (no pun intended), the execution here is infinitely more satisfying. This isn't to say that Starbreeze doesn't riff on its own ideas – you can't use the guns until you enter your DNA into the complex's security system, but you can grab a guard's assault rifle, turn it towards him and use his trigger finger to blow his own head clean off. Vicious, maybe, but consistent with the laws of the game and oddly satisfying.

Also unusual is the camera, which flips from first- to third-person whenever an external viewpoint is required so you don't lose perspective of where you are. This allows Starbreeze to break the usual taboos of FPS gaming – to escape Butcher Bay you can clamber up onto crates, flip over ledges, scale obstacles and so on. It's an unusual move but one of many that can be found in *Escape From Butcher Bay*. Only prolonged playtesting will tell if these elements hang together well, but judging by the initial stages of the game, the signs are promising.

> "DESPITE INITIAL RESERVATIONS, CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK HAS COME A LONG WAY AND LOOKS AS IMPRESSIVE AS IT DESERVES TO BE"

Finally, there's Diesel himself. Thanks to motion-capture technology, the Brooklyn star has been perfectly recreated and his gravelly voice adds genuine gravitas to his character. The man nails the perfect mix of bravado and apathy, as the character seems tailored to suit Diesel's strengths as an actor, something that should come across well in the game. Ultimately, this highlights that the role of Riddick was made for Vin Diesel, and just as *Pitch Black* made him, so *Escape From Butcher Bay* could be the game that makes Starbreeze.

MICROPHONE CHECK

While Vin Diesel is undeniably the star of *Escape From Butcher Bay*, he's not the only recognisable name on the cast list. Big-chinned Ron Perlman (*Blade II*, *Hellboy*) will be growling the lines of some characters while Cole Hauser reprises the role of William Johns, who initially appeared in *Pitch Black*. The voices thus far are excellent and add genuine quality to both the cut-scenes and the appeal of the characters. However, it hasn't escaped our eagle eyes that rapper Xzibit, whose claim to videogame fame thus far is providing *Paparazzi* for the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* soundtrack, is also on the cast list. Hopefully, he won't overstretch himself and will stick to providing an in-game voice – if he's found rapping over the end credits, we won't be happy.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
XBOX

DEVELOPER PROFILE
Starbreeze Studios as it stands today came to fruition as the result of a merger between O3 Games and the original Starbreeze Studios in autumn 2001. Now one of the largest developers in the Nordic region, the company's expertise in motion-capture and game design makes its services highly sought-after.

HISTORY
- **KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE** 2004 [Multi]
- **ENCLAVE** 2003 [Multi]
- **THE OUTFORCE** 2001 [PC]



"VIN DIESEL'S CLOSE AND PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT HAS HELPED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE GAME WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT IMPACT"
LARS JOHANSSON, PRODUCER, STARBREEZE STUDIOS

Vin Diesel's shaven-headed, gravel-voiced likeness really helps bring *Chronicles Of Riddick* to life.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS
OOH, HE'S GORGEOUS – LIKE A YOUNG ALAN BATES

DOOM 3
+
VIN DIESEL
x
PRISON
=
CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK



You'll have to give up some DNA before you get your own firepower.



How did Riddick end up in Butcher Bay? Good question. Perhaps you should find out…

PHANTOM CRASH 2050




Phantom Crash is fast and frantic, so only those with quick reflexes and a hair trigger will get out in one piece.



THE SCOBEES ARE BACK, AND THIS TIME THEY'RE ONLINE…

Has it really been nearly two years since we first tried to bring the joys of *Phantom Crash*'s arena-based robot death to the attention of the gaming world? A quick glance at the first issue of this magazine would suggest so, yet we can't help but be disappointed that such a surprising and enjoyable game was missed by so many Xbox owners, despite being praised by almost all who played it. Naturally, then, Konami's decision to bring the game to the PlayStation2 has us overjoyed – not just because it means everyone who missed out last time gets another bite of the cherry, but there's also talk of throwing online play into the mix.

Originally developed by Genki (who we're told is collaborating with Konami for this new PS2 game), the premise of *Phantom Crash 2050* is largely similar to the Xbox version. Taking place in the not-too-distant, post-apocalyptic future of 2071, robot fighting – known as Rumbling in the original – is the most popular sport around, and as an enthusiastic newcomer it's your task to start at the bottom and become the best in the business. This, not surprisingly, involves lots of dashing around rubble-strewn arenas and blowing up anything that moves; it might not sound particularly taxing, but it's certainly a lot of fun.

However, the real enjoyment is in being able to customise your mech – or Scobee, if Konami keeps the old name – in countless different ways, from key parts such as weapons and lower extremities (legs, tank tracks, wheels and so on) to trivialities like paintwork and logos. Believe us, it all adds up to one enjoyable package.

Of course, with *Phantom Crash* already having its own place in the history books, the question isn't so much how good this pseudo-sequel is going to be, but rather how much Konami is going to change. For the most part, the gameplay looks intact, and short of the obvious reduction in graphical quality we're suitably satisfied. What could prove to be the clincher is how the actual structure of the game will differ – the extremely lengthy Quest mode was what made the Xbox version. And, of course, let's not forget the smaller details such as the tuneful J-pop soundtrack that we fear could be dumbed down to a collection of dirge metal for our teenage American cohorts.

Still, as long as Konami can optimise the potential of online play – something the PS2 isn't particularly good at right now – and integrate it seamlessly into the rest of the game, it could have a winner on its hands.

"WHAT THE GAME LOSES IN FINESSE DURING THE MOVE FROM THE XBOX TO THE PS2 WILL HOPEFULLY BE MADE UP FOR WITH ONLINE PLAY"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Feb '05
GENRE: Mecha
PLAYERS: 1-4 (1-8 Online)

Konami moves Genki's enjoyable mecha blaster onto the PS2 and adds the one thing that was sorely missing before – online play.



With PS2 Online capabilities you should be able to blast the hell out of absent friends.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT



Pandemic has done a good job of holding scale between the big and small elements.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

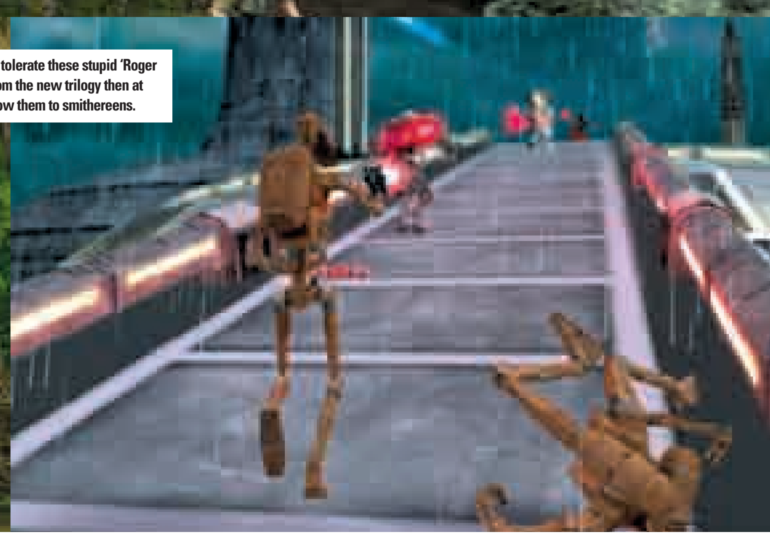
JUMP TO HYPERGAMING

STAR WARS ÷ MULTIPLAYER × PLANETS = STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

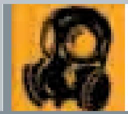
"BATTLEFRONT WILL PUT FANS IN THE HEAT OF THE ACTION AS THEY RELIVE ALL OF THE EPIC BATTLES FROM THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE"

LUCASARTS PRESS RELEASE





If we have to tolerate these stupid 'Roger Roger' droids from the new trilogy then at least we can blow them to smithereens.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Pandemic's output has gradually improved in recent years, beginning with *Dark Reign II* (2000) and the *Army Men* RTS title in 2002 before recently bringing us *Full Spectrum Warrior*. Having previously developed the disappointing *Clone Wars*, *Battlefront* is not the developer's first foray into the world of *Star Wars*.

HISTORY

- **FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR** 2004 [Xbox]
- **STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS** 2002 [Multi]
- **ARMY MEN RTS** 2002 [Multi]

THIS IS THE STAR WARS LICENCE YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR

PS2 **Could it be that LucasArts has finally shrugged off the curse of dire licensed games?** With BioWare's second helping of *KOTOR* on the way, and after *Battlefront*'s E3 debut, we seem to be enjoying a genuine renaissance in quality Force-related gaming. Indeed, if we had high hopes for Pandemic's universe-touring online shooter before Los Angeles offered us a glimpse of what to expect, then we're as excitable as Salacious Crumb after a particularly unnecessary slave murder now we've seen it in action.

As well as doubling the number of controllable vehicles (to an impressive 30, covering both land and air), LucasArts has revealed a little more of how the *Battlefront* gameplay will hold together under the *Star Wars* banner. Laid out simply, each battlefield on the ten included planets is littered with a number of Command Posts. Battles see Posts won and lost, Risk-style, after which they become respawn points for you and your team. Additionally, occupied Posts sometimes spawn vehicles that can potentially tip the scales during a battle, ranging as they do from single-man speeders to formidable gunships.

Pandemic has given a great deal of consideration to the varied terrain of the ten planets – Endor's forests and savannahs contrast magnificently with the red sky and desert floor of Geonosis and the flagstone bridges and canals of Naboo – which should offer as varied a series of theatres of war as any gamer could desire. And what theatres they are, too; massive arenas brimming with features to use in battle. Hoth, for example – reduced to a medium-sized oval for the *Rogue Squadron* games – now actually resembles the vast frozen tundra as seen in *Empire Strikes Back*. Likewise, the rodent-infested forest moon of Endor has been tailored for optimum Speeder Bike-chasing scenarios, resulting in the need for much fast-paced tree dodging.

Gameplay-wise, *Battlefront* seems to maintain the crucial balance between arcade action and team warfare, resulting in a title that will still hold some appeal for those far reaches of the galaxy that have no interest in all things Jedi. However, for the majority of gamers who revere George's universe, the video at E3 ably demonstrated a number of moments where that infamous *Star Wars* magic could be felt in its most distilled form: sniping an Ewok through foliage from over a hundred yards away; sandwiching the cab of an AT-ST between two tree trunks; hovering on a jet-pack as Boba Fett before lobbing a grenade into a throng of troops and screeching away – there really is enough gaming potential invested to draw a positive response from even the most jaded *Star Wars* avoider.

Obviously, the main draw here is the online element, and the touted 64-player PC LAN match-up must stand second only to *Half-Life 2* in the list of damn good reasons to buy a super-powered PC. It's also worth noting, however, that the console versions are still lining up to include up to 16 players online and 32 via LAN hook-ups, and considering the PS2 port of *Rainbow Six 3* limited online deathmatches to six players, that's no mean feat.

DETAILS
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
RELEASE: 21 Sept
GENRE: Online Shooter
PLAYERS: 1-32

We've all become weary of generic titles emblazoned with a *Star Wars* logo, so here's something to grab you – a return to form for LucasArts.

NO JEDI IN TEAM

The team aspect of *Star Wars Battlefront* doesn't extend solely to the toe-to-toe battles between Empire and Rebellion (or, in the case of the *Episode I* and *II*-centric chapters, Republic Clone Army and Separatist Battle Droids) but includes vehicular combat. Certain machines can accommodate a number of gunners and wingmen if players are interested in combining forces. This feature reaches its peak with the Republic Gunship that comes with four spare chairs for your comrades. Grouping some of your team in the same vehicle will probably also be handy for keeping tabs on them, though you can communicate at any time using any compatible headset.

"BATTLEFRONT SEEMS TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN ARCADE ACTION AND TEAM WARFARE"



If there's a single reader out there who has never wanted to ride one of these we'd be surprised.



Now you can have your own hot-Tauntaun-entrail experience. Nice.

BATTLEFIELD 2



The developer is promising around one hundred players online, which will make for some serious scraps.



Why not make friends in *Battlefield 2* online by complimenting someone on their impressive chopper?

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH, DEAR FRIENDS

DETAILS
FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: Sweden
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: Digital Illusions CE
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Online Combat
PLAYERS: TBC

The original online shooter – with all manner of vehicles and authentic weaponry – is back, and bang up to date.

War is great. Well, actually it's hell, but at the moment it seems that combat, killing and the general destruction of human life is boosting the games industry's coffers and profile, as people discover that they don't actually have to dodge bullets to unleash their boyish urges to fire guns and run around in combat gear. The original *Battlefield 1942*, developed by Digital Illusions CE, was a masterstroke of PC gaming and really took online shooters to a whole new level. Several expansion packs and a brief trip to 'Nam later, DICE has returned with details of an all-new *Battlefield* title.

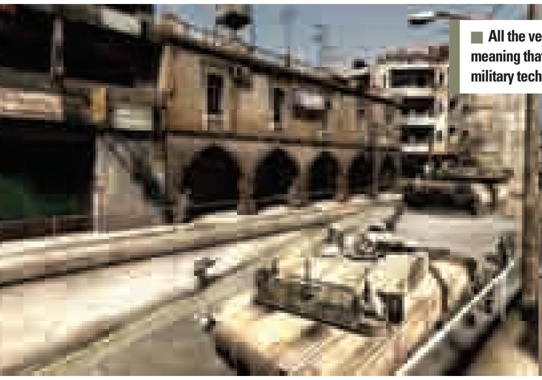
The game has been given a massive makeover, and the series now lodges the player firmly in the present. Playing as either the US, China or the Middle Eastern Coalition, the *Battlefield 2* gamer will have access to all the latest toys recently showcased by Dubya and Tony in Iraq, giving the game an eerily realistic and topical feel.

There will be 30 vehicles in total, including many of the latest planes, tanks and helicopters – so expect hardcore machinery such as the AH64 Apache, the Abrahams tank, and some serious F-16 fighter action. However, it's not just the look and the setting that have changed.

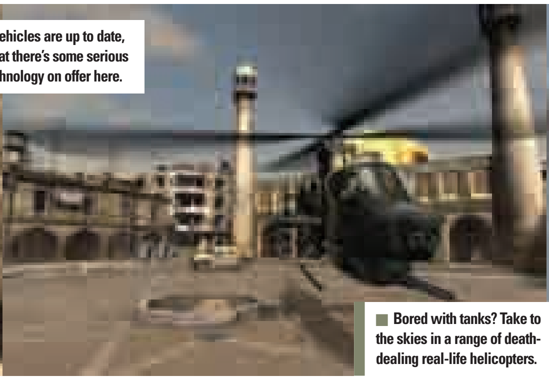
The in-game engine has been given an overhaul and now players will be given two choices about how they want to approach a session of *Battlefield 2*. The choice is between Commander mode or Squad mode, the difference being that players who choose to fight in a normal squad will play as usual, whereas the Commander units will stay behind the lines, directing attacks and assaults by making use of modern surveillance equipment. Previous games have not really seen the need for such tactical detail, but as *Battlefield 2* is hoping to be able to pit over a hundred players against each other at any one time, the necessity for the new mode becomes clear.

Battlefield 2 should be massive, as the original title and the Vietnam-based spin-off have proved to be such roaring successes. DICE has learnt from criticism – an example being that the new maps will automatically shrink or expand depending on how many players are in the session, thus combating the problem of never bumping into people – and it looks like the era of virtual war will continue well into next year.

"THE BATTLEFIELD 2 PLAYER WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ALL THE LATEST TOYS RECENTLY SHOWCASED IN IRAQ, GIVING THE GAME AN EERILY TOPICAL FEEL"



All the vehicles are up to date, meaning that there's some serious military technology on offer here.



Bored with tanks? Take to the skies in a range of death-dealing real-life helicopters.



eMag

FRONT MISSION 4



Get too close to use heavy firepower and close combat comes into play.



Units equipped with radios can call in air strikes and reinforcements to turn the tide.

THE WANZER JOKES STOP RIGHT HERE…

You'd think that being synonymous with a constant flow of *Final Fantasy* titles would be good news for Square Enix, but it has proved to be a mixed blessing. On one hand, the profile of the company has been raised by these epic adventures that are virtually always showered with praise, but the flipside of this is that many of its other titles – which are often every bit as good as the *Final Fantasy* series – slip through unnoticed. Games like *Vagrant Story*, *Tobal No. 1* and even *Front Mission 3* have made it over here but performed far worse than they deserved at retail. Hopefully, this will be the title to turn around the fortunes of at least one of these franchises.

Set six years after the first game in the series, *Front Mission 4* is a continuation of both the narrative and the number-heavy turn-based strategy that has been in effect since the franchise began. Fortunately, though, this is far more than a simple facelift and Square Enix has incorporated a whole host of new features to ensure that the game isn't overshadowed by the likes of *Disgaea* or even its own *Final Fantasy: Tactics Advance*. These include the new Link System that allows units to form allegiances and act accordingly in combat, which ushers in a new level of strategic gameplay. This comes into its own thanks to expansive new maps and areas, all fully furnished with hiding places, strategic high ground and even weather effects that can help or hinder your progress.

"FMV CUT-SCENES ARE AS INCREDIBLE AS ANY WE'VE SEEN, BUT THIS IS A GIVEN FROM SQUARE ENIX"

On the presentation front, five-time *Final Fantasy* art director Yusuke Naora has been brought in to ensure that the experience never feels too industrial or bland – in fact, there's a surprising amount of character in the game (from what we've seen), and the title's narrative is now better structured and incorporated into the action far more than in previous games. The addition of a cast of voice actors will further boost the developer's traditionally cinematic approach to gaming, and the FMV cut-scenes are every bit as incredible as any we've seen, but then this is more or less a given from Square Enix.

However, it's plain to see where most attention has been paid during production of this sequel – to the game's core. At the same time as making the in-depth customisation even deeper, Square Enix has tried to open up the series to a whole new set of players who have come into the genre through the influx of slightly easier-on-the-mind strategy games, particularly noticeable on the GBA. Like *Disgaea*, though, it will be possible to make progress through the game without delving too much into the more complex elements of Wanzer set-up (which really isn't that intimidating anyway); and since many items, weapons and options can be changed on the fly, you're never really stuck with a single set-up.

With much more of Square Enix's catalogue now reaching us courtesy of whichever publisher will snap it up, we're confident that somebody will see fit to bring *Front Mission 4* to PAL territories. It's an undeniably slow-paced experience but attention to detail and a far tighter storyline than we were expecting ensure that tedium will have a hard time setting in. Having received a rapturous reception on its general release in Japan, we'd guess that the recent US launch will see the same story repeated in the West – after such critical acclaim, surely we can't be denied a domestic release? Titles like *Chrono Trigger*, *Threads Of Fate*, *Legend Of Mana* and *Radiant Silvergun* might beg to differ…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: Square Enix
RELEASE: TBC (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

Exchange the usual blasting fare of mecha games for reams of stats and turn-based battles as Square Enix further asserts its mastery of all things strategic.

ADVANCE TO VICTORY

For those new to *Front Mission*, the best parallel with the series is the *Advance Wars* franchise. Grid-based battlefields host skirmishes governed by 'paper, scissors, stone' mechanics, and clashes escalate from single-screen, close-range encounters to sprawling war zones where you can hardly move for enemy units. However, while *Advance Wars* focuses on simplicity and accessibility, *Front Mission* is the opposite – get lost in the tutorial and you may never know what those Status screens really mean. Still, the complex customisation and depth do give the *Front Mission* games more scope than any competing title.

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ When Square Co and Enix Corporation merged in April last year to form Square Enix, they created one of Sony's greatest assets this generation. Both companies have developed a range of epic franchises that have helped establish the Sony and PlayStation brand, so their combined creative might is a force to be reckoned with.

HISTORY

- **THE BOUNCER** 2001 [PS2]
- **VAGRANT STORY** 2000 [PSone]
- **CHRONO TRIGGER** 1995 [SNES]



■ Linked units can assist allies both offensively and defensively.



■ As a Square Enix game, *Front Mission 4* is obliged to feature at least one character with ridiculous hair.



■ *Front Mission 4*s sense of scale outdoes that of all of its rivals.

"PLAYERS CAN FULLY CUSTOMISE THEIR WANZERS, OR MECH UNITS, WITH A VARIETY OF POWERFUL WEAPONRY AND PARTS"

SQUARE ENIX PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

STATS AND MECHS IN PLENTIFUL SUPPLY


FRONT MISSION 3

x


TACTICS

+


VOICE-OVER

=


FRONT MISSION 4

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

DETAILS
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA
GENRE: Survival Horror
PLAYERS: 1

■ After a successful E3 roll call, the terminally demented sister of the *Resident Evil* meat-fests invites us to return for another dose of paranoid confusion.

COME, OH COME WITH US, TO DARK TOWNSHEND'S

PS2 ***Silent Hill* has always eschewed schlocky horror in favour of crawling under the skin and festering, so it will come as little surprise that the E3 showing of Konami's moody monstrosity was enough to give us nightmares – even in a room filled with thousands of people.** However, any attempt to pull cogent narrative elements from the show's three-scenario playable demo will cause some bleeding round the ears. Rather, the three sections on display – a mental hospital, a car park and a truly terrifying forest – were all about mood and style, two factors the fourth title in the series has in abundance.

With the game split between the titular room (which your character, Henry Townshend, is unable to leave due to paranoia issues relating to some recent nightmares) and a strange world inhabited by flying barbecue chefs and inside-out dogs, Konami has created a sensory set-up that unsettles with the merest hint of effort. Silence is juxtaposed with unidentifiable creaks and screams, so that even the hokiest imagery (moving-yet-empty wheelchairs, for example) has its desired effect.

Of course, this is a package heightened by the room itself – a player's only reprieve from the physical onslaught of previous *Silent Hill* games is in the deliberately disorientating first-person hubworld. It is here that Konami excels, managing to layer the paranoia while keeping the player searching for some sort of abstract clue to aid them, changing enough with each visit so that gamers notice, but not enough to make the change identifiable. Again, it's a hokey conceit but, like a fake Derren Brown séance, it's inexplicably effective.

It helps that both sections of the game are of great graphical quality – the view through Townshend's grubby apartment window matches any vista yet seen on PS2, while the haunted world allows players to see through the mist to the writhing creations waiting to meet you. Graphics have a washed-out, filtered quality that capitalises on the 'monsters create static' theme of previous *Silent Hill* titles by scratching up the screen with intrusive white-noise effects when a beast comes within contact range.

Some effective real-time lighting adds another layer of spooky charm, but also carries the practical effect of being able to see new elements of the environment (or even old elements in a new light), resulting in a genuine 'repelled fascination' for each

"SNAPPING A HELLHOUND'S NECK WITH OUR BOOT IS A HIGHLY SATISFYING EXPERIENCE"

environment that's likely to mysteriously pull you back to the controller about five minutes after you've turned the console off.

Yes, it's all very familiar, and with monsters oozing from the walls, hand-walking two-headed nuns and a big *Event Horizon*-style gyroscope floating in space, *The Room* follows many of the typical design specs of previous *Silent Hill* titles. This time round, though, we can't help but be impressed by the technical improvements. Fans of the series will also be pleased that control and combat elements have been tweaked slightly, making them more controllable and combative – we hate to admit it, but snapping a hellhound's neck with our boot has to be one of the most satisfying gaming experiences in quite a while.

Now all that's left is for us to lock ourselves away and hope all these well-considered elements gel better than they did in the disappointing *Silent Hill 3*. Not that we'll be playing *The Room* without thousands of people around us – it's just too damn scary.

PHONE HEX

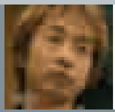
Whilst exploring, we noticed a phone number for a local bar on a billboard outside Townshend's window. We dialled the number, hoping it may offer us some measure of reprieve – perhaps a friendly voice to let us know we weren't alone, perhaps a way out of the room… Sadly, we received only a howling earful of industrial demonic wail, and were forced to reluctantly journey back into the large vacant portal extending from the bathroom brickwork. Sound unnerving? It's testament to the title's overall effect that after only a short play, we didn't want to leave the room any more than Townshend did.


■ This is just like that scene in *The Shining* with the rotten granny, but with less green.


■ The guy is your landlord. He wants to help but, bless him, he's completely oblivious to your torment.

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

PLAYSTATION2/MULTIFORMAT



COMPOSER PROFILE

■ Akira Yamoaka first worked with Konami on Hideo Kojima's underrated *Snatcher* (1994), cementing a working relationship with the developer that has endured for over a decade. Continuing with *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*, Yamaoka-san has created his own symphonies for every *Silent Hill* title.

HISTORY

- **SILENT HILL 3** 2003 [Multi]
- **SILENT HILL 2** 2002 [Multi]
- **SILENT HILL** 2001 [PSone]





■ It looks humid and dank in there, but Townshend doesn't seem to mind the smell.



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

ABODE AND BEYOND

SILENT HILL 2 x INTERFERENCE + FIRST PERSON = THE ROOM

"SILENT HILL 4 DIVES INSIDE THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL SPACE OF GAMERS TO CREATE THE MOST TERRIFYING GAME IN THE SERIES"

WILSON CHENG, PRODUCT MANAGER, KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

■ Don't look into its eyes – it might try to make friends with you…

FORZA MOTORSPORT



The degree of modification is impressive, sure, but just *look* at how great this looks.



Look familiar? This is the infamous Laguna Seca circuit, as seen in *Gran Turismo*.



"FORZA REVS UP XBOX GAMERS WHO ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT CARS"
MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

Once you get to the high end of the cars there are a lot of Le Mans-style machines to race.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CIRCUITS, MODS AND REALISTIC DAMAGE – IT'S ALL HERE

GRAN TURISMO
+
NFS: UNDERGROUND
+
COLIN MCRAE RALLY
=
FORZA MOTORSPORT

FORZA MOTORSPORT
XBOX

DEVELOPER PROFILE
While there has been the occasional odd release from Microsoft Game Studios, the quality has always been consistent. The MGS banner includes internal development teams and developers brought in under the huge Microsoft wing, such as the likes of Bungie, Rare and DICE.

HISTORY
- **NINJA GAIDEN** 2004 [Xbox]
- **RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2** 2004 [Xbox]
- **MECH ASSAULT** 2003 [Xbox]

THIS ISN'T JUST A RACING GAME, IT'S A RACE FOR CONSOLE SUPERIORITY

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '04 (US: Nov '04)
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-8

Microsoft's answer to *Gran Turismo*, this racing game is all about personalisation – every part of the car can be tweaked exactly the way you want it.

When *Forza Motorsport* was announced at E3 it was to a stunned audience. This was Microsoft saying: 'Who needs *Gran Turismo*?' A very brave move that's going to have Xbox and PlayStation2 fans watching this title with baited breath. This means there could be a huge backfire heading Microsoft's way, but from what we've seen so far this doesn't look to be the case.

So what does this offer that might make Polyphony shake? Well, if a console is defined by its developers then a racing game is made by its manufacturers, of which there are 60 in this game. Confirmed so far are Mazda, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz, Honda, Chevrolet, Porsche, BMW and Dodge. One other definite name is Ferrari, a brand you won't see in *Gran Turismo* and a huge catch for *Forza* – especially since the game includes handling-affecting damage, a feature normally only seen in rally games. And this is just the beginning of the Polyphony nightmare.

A big part of this racer is the car-tuning system. Like many other games before it this allows you to change suspension heights, gear ratios and so on, but *Forza* doesn't do anything by halves. So if 'fuel mapping' and 'forced induction pressure' mean anything to you, you're going to be very happy. And if they don't? Well, consider it an educational program. The high level of detail in this area will no doubt lead to some fantastic 'who can tune X car' better bouts on Xbox Live.

At their most extreme, modifications include being able to install different engines in each car. There has been talk of dropping Ferrari engines into different shells but it remains to be seen how far this particular aspect can be taken. In theory, if it's physically possible in the real world you should be able to do it in this game. Leave *Gran Turismo* to the kids, this is for real men who get high on petrol fumes and burning rubber.

Fine-tuning isn't the limit of the fiddling that can be done in *Forza*. Not content with taking on *Gran Turismo* the developer also seems set on challenging the likes of *Need For Speed*, so as well as tuning you'll also be able to pimp your ride. This means body kits, skirts, rims, spoilers, scoops and so on, a very large percentage of which are licensed from real post-showroom mod kits. We'd love to meet the team responsible for sorting out the licences in this game.

You can also change the colour scheme of each car and add as many personalised decals as you want. This includes using an art package to design your own logos, stickers and paint jobs. So if you want a go faster stripe that resembles a game of *Pipe Dreams* there's nothing to stop you. With all these customisation options there should, in theory, be no such thing as a dull car in this game, something that has continually dogged *Gran Turismo*.

So *Forza* is taking every aspect of the driving genre and doing it bigger and better, but what is it doing that's new? The most exciting feature here is the Drivatar AI system. A lot of the racing in this game is done in teams. Obviously, you can only manage one of the cars in your team but using the Drivatar system you can teach your teammates to drive like you – aggressively, defensively, whatever you choose. It's always tough to emulate human characteristics in racing games but this could be just the system to pull off a convincing show.

No doubt Microsoft is also hoping that *Forza Motorsports* is going to put on a similarly convincing performance in order to cause a mass PlayStation2 defection. There's no denying this has potential to be a *Gran Turismo* beater, but Polyphony has had a lot more experience at this type of game. We certainly wouldn't place bets on what is sure to be a race to remember.

"THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE POLYPHONY NIGHTMARE"

ON THE RIGHT TRACK
The full roster of *Forza*'s circuits isn't anywhere near final, but two big names have been announced – Laguna Seca and Nürburgring. The inclusion of the Laguna Seca track is no doubt going to annoy Sony, and the Nürburgring circuit seems to be the 'in thing' for racing games at the moment. Ever since *Project Gotham 2* featured the track it's become very hot property. Realistic handling combined with a circuit like Nürburgring means you're going to need one hundred per cent concentration. Members of the Bizarre Creations development team have already been impressed by the *Forza* version, which is a hearty stamp of approval in our book.





There are lots of official body kits for you to buy and strap onto your cars.



If this is really what you want to do with your car then we can't stop you. Off you go.

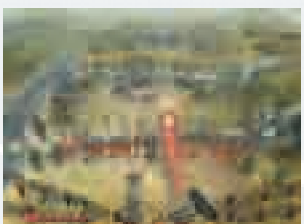
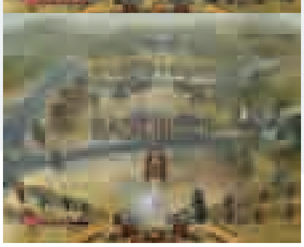
SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Odama

HE'S A SAMURAI PINBALL WIZARD

Format: GameCube
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Vivarium
Genre: Strategy Pinball
Players: 1-2

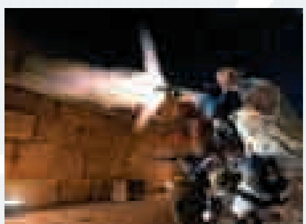
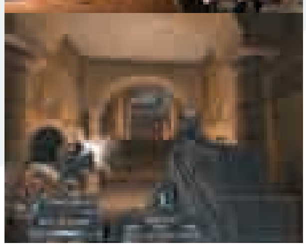
As bizarre concepts go, *Odama* is perhaps unique – a pinball game that incorporates wartime strategy, all set in feudal Japan. Players are set the task of using a giant pinball (the Odama of the title) to plough through enemy battalions and destroy barracks, while your own men remove obstacles and free up extra flippers around each 'table'. Enemy soldiers hit by the Odama join your ranks and strengthen your offence – however, a second player can join in to help the enemy dodge the Odama, and even dishearten your own men by performing rhythmic beats on the *Donkey Konga* bongo controller. Like we said, it sounds completely bizarre, but we have faith in Nintendo that it could turn out to be rather interesting.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow

THE NEXT XBOX-LIVE ESSENTIAL

Format: Xbox
Origin: Canada
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (1-16 Online)

While the thought of upgrading a game that's already out usually fills us with all kinds of anger, Ubisoft's update to the *Rainbow Six* series is somewhat justified. Essentially, *Black Arrow* can be classed as a whole new game thanks to a brand new single-player campaign that moves out into more Mediterranean and Eastern European levels and boasts smarter AI than the previous instalment. However, the big emphasis is on the Live side of things. Taking full advantage of Live 3.0's new features (including clan management and messaging) as well as various improvements to multiplayer action and new game modes, it's likely to become the most popular Live game to date.

RELEASE DATE: 20 August

FIFA 2005

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER FIFA GAME

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube/PC
Origin: Canada
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-4 (TBA Online)





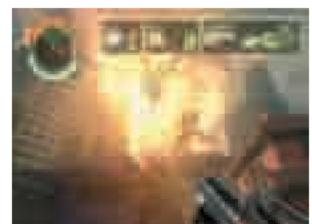
Oh, come on – did you really need us to tell you that with this year's football season done and dusted, you could look forward to the joys of yet another *FIFA* game by the end of the year? Probably not. But then with last year's game introducing new elements such as Off The Ball play it's hard to see where EA can take the series next – particularly since *UEFA Euro 2004* promptly dropped most of the improvements for no reason whatsoever. For now, EA is keeping rather tight-lipped about what it'll be doing to make *FIFA 2005* more ground-breaking than the competition, but whatever it does, you know it's going to go straight to the top of the chart.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

Snowblind

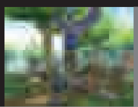
WELL, THAT'S JUST SUPER, SOLDIER

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (1-16 Online)



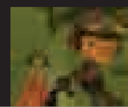

With all its experience of third-person platform adventures, the idea of Crystal Dynamics shifting to the FPS genre has us slightly wary. Certainly, there's no doubt that *Snowblind* looks impressive, even if the premise of playing a new breed of super-soldier doesn't conjure up images of originality. What we're rather hesitant about, though, is exactly what the game will offer over the deluge of other FPS games; despite constant references to weapons yielding "a variety and depth of gameplay never before realised" and the ability to build an emotional bond with your teammates, Eidos has yet to prove how this translates into playability. We hope it's as interesting as it sounds.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '04



Canned – True Fantasy Live Online [Xb]

■ Despite promising to be one of the key titles for the Xbox Live line-up, Microsoft has closed all development on its epic MMORPG and killed all hope for what promised to be something really special.



Canned – Psychonauts [Xb]

■ Another interesting-looking title to fall foul of Microsoft's axe – Double Fine's unique and dark-humoured platform adventure is now without a publisher and is unlikely to hit its Christmas 2004 release date.

Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition

DUB BE GOOD TO ROCKSTAR

Format: PS2/Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Rockstar Games
Developer: Rockstar San Diego
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2 (TBA Online)



Not only will the news of a third *Midnight Club* game come as no great shock to many of us, but Rockstar has, as always, proved suitably vague about what the game is likely to feature. Judging by the handful of screenshots available, though, we're likely to see some of the shiniest cars ever to grace a racing game thanks to an abundance of lighting effects. Combine that with Rockstar's now tried-and-tested freestyle racing formula and the streetwise style factor that will no doubt come from bringing 'automotive lifestyles' publication *DUB Magazine* into the mix and it all looks promising. But will it have enough power under the bonnet to outpace *Burnout 3*?

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

Midway [Working Title]

IN THE NAVY, YOU CAN SAIL THE SEVEN SEAS

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: SCi
Developer: In-House
Genre: RTS
Players: 1-16



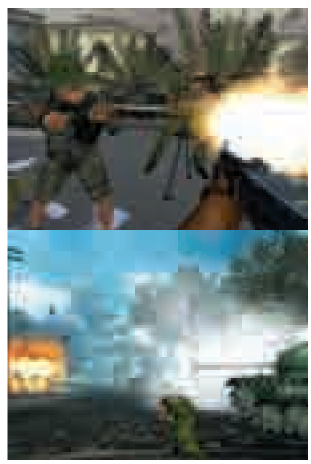
If you like the idea of taking control of an entire naval fleet and blowing away anything that moves, then *Midway* is likely to be right up your street. Based on the events of World War II leading up to the Battle of Midway (one of the greatest naval victories of all time, it says here), players get the chance to control battleships, aircraft carriers, submarines and planes in an effort to destroy the opposition, who'll be Japanese or American depending on who you play as. What will be interesting to see is how *Midway* manages to deal with the 'seamless' switching between units promised by SCi, particularly during the heat of the action in the online multiplayer skirmishes that the game offers.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05

Men Of Valor: The Vietnam War

BRAVE MEN, BAD SPELLING

Format: Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Vivendi Universal
Developer: 2015
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (TBA Online)



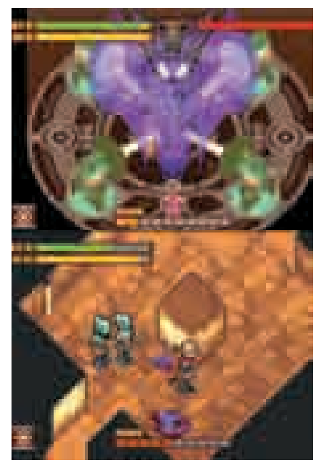
And so the trend for Vietnam-based warfare goes on, with Vivendi's upcoming *Men Of Valor* finally moving towards completion. Set, as you'd expect, during the early stages of the Vietnam War and developed by the studio behind EA's *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*, the combination of historically accurate scenarios, cunning AI, detailed graphics and scripted events that have been promised all sound like they could add up to another highly atmospheric effort. The question is, however, whether that's really enough to stand out from every other similarly-themed FPS around at the moment; if not, then 2015's efforts (and Vivendi's investment in the project) could turn out to have been wasted.

RELEASE DATE: October '04

Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django

MORE SUNSHINE ON YOUR GBA

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-House
Genre: RPG
Players: 1-4



Although the first game only came out recently in the UK, Konami already has its sights set on releasing a sequel to Hideo Kojima's *Boktai* in just a few months time. With a promise that *Solar Boy Django* will focus more on traditional RPG elements than the original *Boktai*, it seems that a lot of work has been done under the hood rather than simply sprucing up the graphics. For instance, Django now has over 60 solar-powered weapons at his disposal (including non-gun-related ones such as swords), many of which can be fused together to create even more powerful vampire-slaying accessories. It sounds great, though it does mean having to go back out into the sunshine once again…

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05



Big money, big prizes… **The Killing Game Show Amiga [Psygnosis] 1990**


AND CODING
LIVES
GAME SHOW!
ORI-CAM
TOOL
WATER
FREEZER







Goodbye To All That



Our arcades are dying. But does this mean the loss of more than just some great games? games™ set out on a quest to discover why we should be bothered

What does it mean to you? In your home town, right now, they're pulling the last of the videogame cabinets from the amusement arcades. They're making room for another fruit machine, with its empty promises of 50-quid jackpots and sound samples from a bloke trying too hard to sound like Del Boy Trotter. If you look closely, you can see a worn patch of carpet at the foot of the brainless, flashing *Big Breakfast* fruit machine. It's old wear, and it probably came from the agitated, shuffling feet of some poor sap trying to get anywhere, *anywhere* in *Defender*. In the corner, there's the place where the *Gauntlet* cabinet sat, intimidating youngsters, daring them to team up with the big boys who knew where all the keys were, and how best to avoid Death.





But then, you can't really avoid Death. You only need to look at the arcade industry's sickly pallor to know that. Facts and figures? They're everywhere. Proof that the big names in arcade manufacturing are abandoning ship. Midway, who gave us *Spy Hunter*, *Tapper* and *Sinistar*? Abandoned the arcade market. Konami, who gave us *Gradius*, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* and *Frogger*? Pulling out, retreating, hedging its bets. Capcom, who gave us *Street Fighter*, *Commando* and *Ghosts 'N Goblins*? Slipping into the darkness. Only SEGA seems to be willing to ride the ship down into the briny black, with its *Derby Owners Club* and *Initial D* ballast keeping things afloat for a little while longer at least.





All doom and gloom, for sure. But what does it mean to you? What does it mean to me? We all have our 'arcade memory'. It's a special place in our heads, a place filled with cigarette smoke and disembodied voices wishing us good luck, because we're gonna need it. In this writer's head, there's a young boy watching a big guy play *Marble Madness*. The big guy's strolling it, and the young boy studies the hand/trackball action. The same young boy first played *Gauntlet* in a Scottish town called Largs. He played poorly. He shot the food. Again, that young boy, in Ayr, and he's playing *OutRun*. He'd never guess that 15 years later, he'd still be playing it, only this time at home.

Eighties Glasgow now, this writer's home, and an arcade called Enterprise. Here, the *Marble Madness* student becomes the master. Younger kids watch, learn, the circle complete. But what of these places this young boy visited when he was young? What of

"There's no cacophany of sound, no explosions or gunfire or chaos"



the places that made me a gamer? Made us all gamers? Are they all gone? Fundamentally, what does the demise of the arcade industry really mean? It was time for a road trip. Friends are gathered and plans are made, to catch some trains and see what's still out there. Maybe we'll find a *Gauntlet* somewhere. Maybe we can cheat Death one last time. Maybe we'll just get drunk and remember.

Paisley

In Paisley, just outside Glasgow, there's always been a small amusement arcade and café complex called Leisureland. It's been a place of legend for generations of Glasgow gamers. Many city boys have taken the train ride to Paisley to play some of the old machines, braving the *Wicker Man*-style atmosphere and the glares of old folk (and young folk with old faces). We were next in line.

There's only two of us for this leg of the trip, and Kenny's at University in Paisley so he knows his way around. He leads me past three little amusement arcades that might once have housed videogames, but now just blink their cherries at us from the window. In truth, I don't know what to expect from Leisureland. I have high hopes. The depressing fact of the matter is that you can know all there is to know about the flagging popularity of arcade gaming as soon as you open the door to these places. The fruit machines are everywhere, whirring and clicking. There's no glorious cacophony of sound, no explosions or gunfire or chaos or "I Hunger!". In Leisureland, there's just a café to the right, with old women catching up on their day, and to the left, shoved up by the window, five arcade machines.





"Five," Kenny says, and shakes his head. I take out a notepad. I write down the names of the machines. *Shock Troopers*, *Lethal Enforcers*, *Virtua Striker 3*, *Need For Speed* and *Neo Turf Masters*, a cabinet I have in the house. Our home practice at *Turf Masters* has us on for about half an hour with only one quid. So much for the legendary Leisureland. It's gone the way of the rest of them. And yet there's six fruit machines (known round here as puggies) to a man. "It's purely economic," says a guy called Charlie. "People play the puggies."

Largs

Ryan turns up for the main leg of the trip. He's the same age as me. We both remember being crap at *Asteroids*. Kenny starts the day off well by getting too excited about his bottle of Coke and soaking himself. It's hardly Hunter S. Thompson behaviour. We spend five minutes looking for a napkin, before realising Ryan has been given one with his coffee. Typical gamers. Poor eyesight, poor attention span. ▷

An Arcade Memory

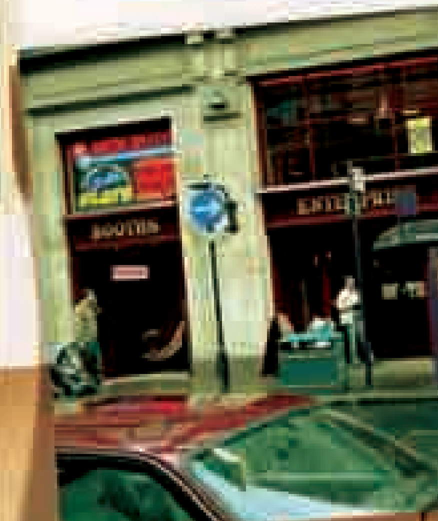
"I got into videogames via home systems, as opposed to arcades, so I have few formative arcade experiences, except that of standing next to 'big boys' playing Space Invaders and really wanting to have a go but being far too shy. Back in the late Seventies and early Eighties, playing videogames really was something girls just didn't do. Arcades (well, machines in chip shops and at ice rinks) were a bastion of boyness.

However, in the early Nineties, when I'd earned my stripes at console gaming, I was still intimidated by arcades, but couldn't resist visiting the venues in London where the latest Japanese cabinets were being previewed. One time, I was observing quite a big, hard-looking guy thrashing a new edition of Street Fighter II. In those days I only looked about 17, and I think he was quite surprised to see a short, wide-eyed girl watching him so intently, and offered to take me on. Several tournaments later and I'd beaten him every time. I don't know who was more surprised – him or me – but I felt I'd finally undergone a significant gamers' rite of passage."

Violet Berlin, Whizzbang TV











I've bought a rival games magazine and am looking at the pictures as the train makes its way towards the coast. We get to talking about how ridiculous it is that we have to sit on a train for ages if we want to play some arcade games. "It's ridiculous that it takes one of us to be writing an article for a magazine to get us to go out and play them at all," Kenny notes. It's a fair point, and it puts me off looking at any more screenshots of a spy game that probably won't be the equal of *Crystal Castles*.

We stop for a pint or two in Macaulay's Bar. It's a nice place, and there's a fruit machine in the corner. It winks at me. It knows. It occurs to me that this might be the kind of place where there were once cocktail-table arcade games. Even those are almost all gone, and yet surely everyone remembers going to the pub with their parents and whiling away their time on *Commando*? I'm reminded of a friend who managed a city-centre pub and ordered one of those new multi-game cocktail tables. "I thought it would have retro appeal," he said. "Turned out we spent the month cleaning the dust off it."

Before we hit the big arcade, we pop into a little one called Cullis' Amusements. There's nothing of any note inside, apart from a *Police 24/7* machine, which has me ducking and diving, and a little girl giggling at my behaviour. "Just shoot them," she suggests, seeing no need for my spasmodic drops to the carpet. Inevitably, they just shoot me.

I get a heads-up from Kenny. Gloriously, there's an old man in the place who triggers all our arcade memories. He's at the Elvis *Penny Falls* machine (a two-pence job, none of your fancy ten-pencers here) with a plastic cup full of coppers. Every time he drops a good coin and wins eight pence, he



Our Gaming Life In Their Hands

If there's one company that could save arcade gaming, it has to be SEGA. The arcade giant has been responsible for many of our great arcade memories, and has always displayed an unshakeable commitment towards the industry.

Paul Williams, chief operating officer at SEGA Amusements Europe, admits that there have been troubled times of late. "The growth of technology in the console market has made it look like there's little difference between what you can play in the arcade and what you can play at home," he says. "It's taken a while for the industry to work out what it needs to offer to bring people back into the arcades. There's also the fact that there's been an explosion in people buying and using mobile phones. There's only so much leisure spend to go around."

But Williams is confident of the way ahead, and the future does look bright. "We're moving things forward. In Japan, the market is stagnant for the more traditional driving and shooting games. SEGA has found the large multiplayer machines, such as *Derby Owners Club*, to be very successful. In fact, there's a football game coming along the same lines. There are plans to bring it to the UK at some point next year, and it'll be based on the Champions League, with licensed teams, strips, players and stadiums." For those of us who enjoy nostalgia trips, there's another appealing aspect of the football game, it seems. "There'll be an appeal to collectors too. The game uses Panini cards, and we want players to be swapping them."

Our gaming life in safe hands then, even if one of those hands might be showing signs of wear and tear. "I have a middle-finger indentation from my days playing *Pac-Man* in a pool hall," Paul says. "The ball was off the top of the joystick. It was right down to the thread…"

"What was once a cavernous arcade was now a ten-pin bowling set-up with no-one playing"

turns to Ryan and shakes his cup. A little wink. A little shake. He's a psychopath, sure, but he's also a *Penny Falls* hustler, an important bit-player in any visualisation of 'the way things were.' God bless him, he came in with 20 pence, and he'll probably go home six pence up. We leave him to dance around the machine, shaking his coppers and scoring his wins. He has given us hope.

Escape, they're calling it now. It's a big amusement complex on Largs' front. The last time I'd been inside was when I was in Primary Five. It was the first time I'd ever played *Star Wars*. The first time I'd ever sat inside that big cabinet. Now, where there was once a cavernous arcade glittering with 20p-a-go wonders, was a large room cut in half. Up the back was a ten-pin bowling set-up with no-one playing. *Space Harrier* used to live there. In a little annexe in the left-hand corner were some arcade machines, crowded out by the puggies, the fruit-filled Daleks. The newest machine? *Time Crisis 3*. The oldest machine? *Lucky And Wild*. The crippling sense of depression? Overwhelming.

Ryan and Kenny refuse to play *Dancing Stage*, so they go to the *Penny Falls* machine. I take out my notepad, and start to write with a numb hand and a numb head. I've been doing it for two minutes when one of the staff, a blonde girl of about 18, says: "Excuse me? Do you mind telling me why you're taking down the numbers of our machines?" I don't have an answer for her. Not one I can express without her taking a mental note of it and repeating it for her friends' amusement later that night. I want to tell her that I'm trying to work out what it all means. What the death of arcade gaming means to me. I'm trying to understand why it feels so painful to confront the truth of it.

She gets the assistant manager. He's a nice guy, but young. He probably can't remember being

A Pound A Pop



A complaint many people have of the arcade industry is the price of one credit on the latest machines. A pound a credit is the going rate, and many people just refuse to pay that much for a few minutes of gaming bliss. Of course, there are plenty of other things you could be doing with that saved pound coin…

Football Stickers
Relive your youth in another way. Buy yourself some stickers and go and hang around down the local school, trying to swap them. Don't tell the police that games™ sent you.

Three First-Class Stamps
You could use them to send letters to games™, SEGA and Capcom, lamenting the death of the arcade industry and blaming it on Microsoft.

Two Cans Of Tizer
Here's a gaming fact: it used to take two cans of Tizer to keep you awake while you played *Pit-Fighter*. Drink the Tizer and have a flashback worse than the ones the Vietnam veterans suffer.

Give It To Charity
Yes, you could give that pound to the little kids in impoverished countries. Little kids who would love the opportunity to play arcade machines. Little kids who would love to have that choice. Little kids who don't want your money, you ungrateful swine.

A Quarter Of This Magazine
What better way to spend your precious pound than on 40-odd pages of a quality games magazine? If you're lucky, you might just get the section with the article about the arcade industry that your tight-fisted nature is helping to destroy.





"The old place where the funfair used to be is all houses now, so the Golden Disc is the last-chance saloon"

crap at *Asteroids*. I ask him some stock questions, but it's me pretending to be a journalist, that's all. I'm not interested in why he thinks the fruit machines have replaced the games machines. I can see it. I can feel it. Meanwhile, on the *Penny Falls* machine, Ryan is inexplicably up.

Ayr
It's the last leg of the trip, and probably the leg that means the most to me. Forget Tokyo, Ayr is my gaming Mecca. Ayr is the seaside town where my da watched me play *Super Sprint*. Ayr is the seaside town where my ma gave me another 10p for *Galaga*. My arcade memory has a special place set aside for Ayr. The old place where the funfair used to be was all houses now, so The Golden Disc had become last-chance saloon. A big amusement arcade, the biggest in Ayr, we all had fond memories of it. As we enjoyed a Chinese lunch in the New City restaurant, the waiter overheard us reminiscing and got chatting. "It's the only arcade in Ayr now. And it's mostly puggies." There was a faraway look in his eyes. "It's just one of those things."

To its credit, the Disc still had a variety of machines. Mostly puggies, like the man said, but variety nonetheless. Against the back wall, the arcade machines sat, suffering from neglect and screen-burn. Some teenage girls were bouncing on the *Dancing Stage* machine, their friends watching the screen with admiration, their boyfriends not watching the screen at all.

A little boy was pulling at the sticks of the *X-Men* machine, without having any money in. I was surprised that kids still did that kind of thing. These days, children know all about interactivity; they know when they're actually 'in control'. And yet the kid was doing the stick-pulling-with-no-money-in routine anyway. Perhaps it's a ritual dance, something we all need to do to earn our arcade stripes.

Virtua Cop 3 was suffering a strange fate. A guy was playing it, but barely even paying attention. He just had his gun raised and was clacking away at the screen while he spoke on his mobile phone. He glanced at me, and for a moment I wondered if

"Forget Tokyo, Ayr is my gaming Mecca. We all have one. Ayr is where my da watched me play Super Sprint"



One Life Left

If there's any hope for arcade gaming in the future, the perfect model of success might be found within the hulking beast that is *Derby Owners Club*. Its sheer size is impressive enough – the monster displays races in letterbox format across two big 50-inch screens, and eight 19-inch monitors are lined up in front for individual player control. It looks incredible, and plays beautifully. Twenty-three-year-old Chris Codwell, who has a PS2 and an Xbox at home, is the proud owner of three different racehorses, held forever on three magnetic data cards. "I'm not into arcade games, really," he says. "You get better graphics on the consoles these days. But you can't get anything like this in your bedroom. It's good to come down here with a few mates and enjoy a bit of banter while you race."

It's clearly a social experience as much as it's a game. And it offers value for money too, according to 19-year-old Gillian Dixon, whose horse is called Gillandbrian. "I'm not too good at games, so usually I'm off a machine in a couple of minutes – it feels like a waste of money. But with this, you're guaranteed about seven or eight minutes for your pound."

It seems simple. An arcade machine needs to offer a unique experience and value for money. It's back to square one, then, with the cabinets having to carve out their niche and appeal to the mainstream once more, with new ideas and new ways to play. *Derby Owners Club* is the frontrunner. We can only hope others will follow its lead.

he was some kind of Zen Master at lightgun games, the kind of guy who doesn't even have to look. Then I noticed that his shots were everywhere, and that his participation level was nil. Why on earth had he put his quid in?

"I don't really like computer games," he told me. "I just come here because the weans like watching me play them. They're too scared to play them themselves." And true enough, his kids were there, a few feet behind him, just watching him go through the motions. It was a strange sight. The kids too intimidated to play, watching their daddy pretend to be interested in something he didn't understand. I couldn't tell if it was heart-warming or disturbing. This wasn't what arcades were made for. Where were the people I remember from arcades gone by? Where was the *Phoenix*-shark, his fingers ablaze, a cigarette drooping from his lip? Where were the two teenagers hammering out ridiculous record times on *Track & Field*?

Sitting inside the *Ridge Racer* cabinet took me away from it all. I paid my 50p and got the wheel in my hands. It was a game I'd played often. Too often. It was a game I'd studied, watching other guys play it, admiring their cornering. When I started to drive, it came back to me naturally. I started stealing positions, crawling up on the leader. I became aware of someone watching and had enough time to turn. Not a group of kids, as would once have happened when arcade gaming was alive, but just another guy my age. His girlfriend pulled at his arm, but he resisted. He wanted to stay on a bit longer. To watch. I kept going, crawling up on the leader, desperate not to blow it in front of this guy who remembered what it all used to mean. Still the guy's girlfriend urged him to move along. He shook his head, no. He waited, and was still there when I crossed the line in first place. He waited a little longer to give me an approving nod.

I was happy, but as I watched the guy walk away with his girlfriend, I realised something. It's not just the arcade industry that's dying. Arcade gamers are almost gone too. People concerned with tabling high scores? Gone. People happy to just wait and watch while someone else plays well or gets lucky? Gone.

What does it mean to me? What does it mean to you? Too much too late, most likely. Why does it pain us so? It's not so much the dying that hurts, it's the knowledge that we watched it die and did nothing about it. Death. No potion. No way out. We've all gone and shot the food.



Find the nearest phone box and get changed into your brightly coloured unitard – you're about to enter the City Of Heroes…

City Of Heroes 116



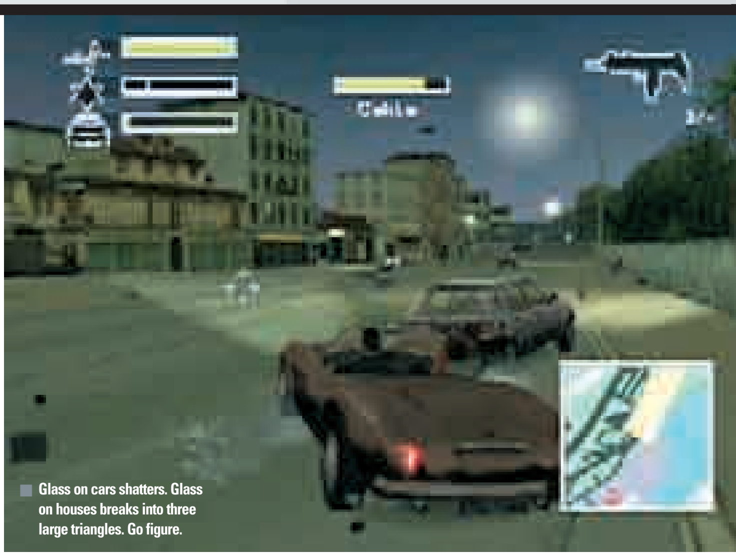
REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know, if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.

STILL PRONOUNCED 'DRIVER 3' AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

DRIV3R



Glass on cars shatters. Glass on houses breaks into three large triangles. Go figure.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Reflections

PRICE
£44.99

RELEASE
Out Now

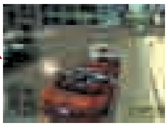
PLAYERS
1

It's been a good decade for Reflections. *Destruction Derby* was a highlight of the PlayStation's opening salvo, and the original *Driver* tore up the PSone driving circuit. This particular reviewer even enjoyed the much-misunderstood *Stuntman* through to its satisfying conclusion. And it genuinely took months. Which begs the question: what went wrong with *Driv3r*? The initial response, of course, is to try to single out an errant element that undermines the rest of the experience, but sadly that is just not the case here. The truth is that while *Driv3r* is by no means the worst videogame ever – and generally achieves a degree of what it attempts – it is also a shallow and haphazard experience that belies its slick veneer.

Perhaps it's a question of hype; or rather, that it would be impossible for *Driv3r* to live up to the expectations of greatness it has set itself over the last year or so. Promos by Tony and Ridley Scott, celebrity voice-overs, a simultaneous soundtrack release – even the reputation of the trusted *Driver* franchise… few videogames have boasted such high production values (a notable exception being Atari's own *Enter The Matrix*), and it's possible that even *Vice City* would have seemed lacklustre if it had flopped in on the hollow wave-crest currently occupied by *Driv3r*. However, if viewed solely as a vehicular title, *Driv3r* does satisfy the majority of gaming demands to a degree. The myriad problems on display here are more related to tone and consistency, or rather the awkward and incongruous manner in which the driving and walking sections have been thrown together.

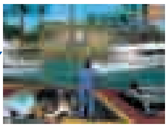
Let's take driving: attractive, controllable and built around a solid damage engine that doesn't disappoint – essentially, exactly what you would expect from a team revered for its mastery of the genre. The three sprawling cities have been brilliantly implemented as well, and are perfectly designed for high-speed chases. Admittedly,

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.



AS GOOD AS

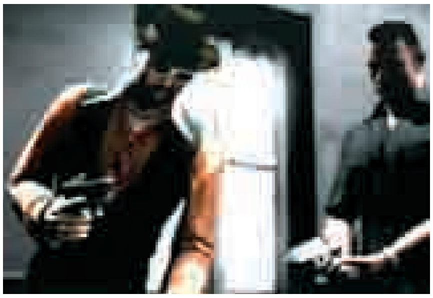
WORSE THAN



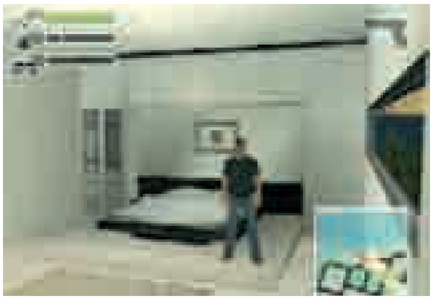
GTA: VICE CITY



Try to stay in the car as long as possible – it'll save the frustration of tackling the on-foot sections…



The story is daft – Tanner would be fired from an Eighties action movie.

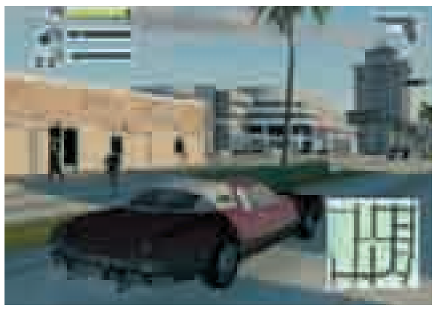


Hello! was unimpressed with Tanner's minimalist whitewash shrine.





Okay, so the 'previously on *Driv3r*' cut-scenes are kind of cool.



Think more *The Getaway* than *GTA* and you're getting near the mark.

Stuntman's immovable lamp posts are back to ruin an otherwise straightforward cruise, and the cops still prefer heading in a direct line to swerving, but the sections of *Driv3r* actually centred on the role of 'driver' certainly know how to give Mr Average Gamer the action he so desperately wants. They also manage to deliver the palpable sense of pace, power and simply 'being there' that many driving games can only dream of offering. In short, they place Joe Average in a position where he feels safe and in control of his environment. That this sense of gaming security is so starkly shattered the moment you exit your vehicle and tackle the part of *Driv3r* essayed on foot is positively tragic.

Placed beside the in-car excitement, shooty Tanner seems more like an enfeebled younger brother than part of the same game. So graceful behind the wheel, he is now ungainly and inelegant, obliterating any semblance of cool the character might have had. Combat is a staid and nonchalant affair, as stationary enemies half-heartedly plug away at you, while building interiors are often reminiscent of a different generation of console. It's almiost difficult at times to believe the two game engines were created by the same developer.

Of course, Reflections could have played the sleight-of-hand card and glossed over many of these flaws, but the juxtaposition of *Driv3r*'s personalities only serves to highlight other apparent weaknesses in the game engine(s). It also counteracts many of the narrative elements built up by the impressive cut-scenes, as the player is jarred from the game world and immersion makes way for perseverance. Without these pedestrian components (no pun intended), the movies would have seemed like a reward for a job well done. Now they're just trailers for the next level, superfluous to the physical completion of any required task. Even the Director mode seems out of place here, highlighting the time spent as Tanner running around on the spot and just how flawed, glitchy and seemingly unfinished the entire package is.

And this is the single greatest issue with *Driv3r* – that it is so cursed by glitches and bugs, and so devoid of anything approaching AI, that it's really impossible to believe the code sitting in your local store is anywhere near complete. Whether it was yet another victim of the 'must release this financial year' school of boardroom politics is immaterial – Driv3r is an unapologetically weak title, and the fact it puffs out its chest and demands respect from the videogame community is unforgivable. If *Driv3r* were solely a driving title it could score further towards the top end of the scale and proudly lay claim to its predestined 'blockbuster' epithet. As it stands, however, those audience members expecting the 'event' game of the summer may find themselves bitterly unsatisfied when the lights come up.

games™ ENHANCED

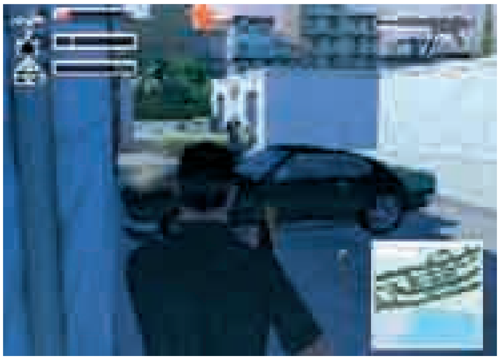
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

CARS: Take anything you want, you've earned it. Bikes too, though you can't pull a drive-by on them.

TRAVEL: As well as Miami, which sets the tone gently, you've got Nice and Istanbul to contend with.

ARTIFICIAL STUPIDITY

While we hate to be the bearer of bad news, the AI in *Driv3r* – for other drivers and pedestrian gangsters – is truly dreadful, and would probably seem weak if applied to a modern GBA title. As in previous *Driver* titles, cops will make a beeline for you in nearly all situations, even launching their car into the sea in an attempt to destabilise your powerboat. What's more, if you drive along the coast and pass a police speedboat it will keep up with your car, constantly attempting to mount the bank to get to you. However, this lack of smarts pales when compared to that of the on-foot NPCs, whose intelligence seems genuinely limited to 'sidestep' or 'crouch', and who will happily wait for you to edge round a corner and slowly take out six other men in the room without retreating or returning fire.



XBOX **£44.99**



Inexplicably, the graphical quality of *Driv3r* seems to be higher on the PS2 than the Xbox, the latter seeming far rougher around the edges. However, *Driv3r*'s best sections feel much more natural with an Xbox pad, as triggers simulate driving pedals better than the DualShock's buttons. Oh, and it's still really bugged.

FAQs

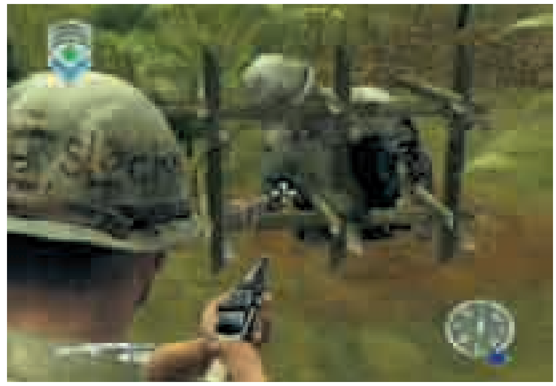
Q. HOW DOES IT COMPARE TO *DRIVER 2*?
Visually, it's an improvement… but then *Driver 2* was a PSone game, so it ought to be.

Q. SO IS IT BETTER THAN *GTA*?
The two really aren't comparable. *Driv3r* is purely mission based and movie-linear, though the extra driving games add some depth.

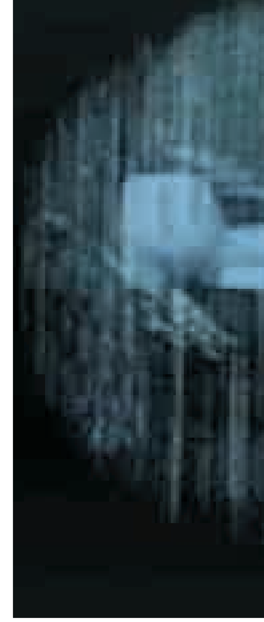
Q. A NEW BENCHMARK IN CINEMATIC GAMING?
Not remotely, but when you restart a saved game you get a very cool 'previously on *Driv3r*' recap montage.

VERDICT 4/10
A GAME OF TWO HALVES, NEITHER OF WHICH IS FINISHED





The realistic portrayal of war is harrowing, yet more engaging than the likes of *Medal Of Honor*.



SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

GUERRILLA WARFARE MAKES A CRIMSON CONSOLE SPLASH

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
PC, Xbox

ORIGIN
Holland

PUBLISHER
Eidos

DEVELOPER
Guerrilla Games

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
September '04

PLAYERS
1

In an age when we often deride our violent entertainment for not being violent enough (and therefore being an irresponsible and exploitative representation of whatever atrocity it depicts), Guerrilla's *Shellshock: Nam '67* is a curious creature. While it can be commended for its portrayal of battlefield bloodshed – showing it to be horrible and emotionally crippling – it also revels in many of the most gratuitous filmic clichés of the Vietnam War. Take the cut-scene where one of your team loses it and shoots a POW in the head, for example – far more harrowing than the quality of character models would suggest, yet served as a narrative mid-course treat between large servings of sprawling, identikit slaughter. So it's *Operation Wolf* with a moral core, then; affecting, but in many other ways just a series of violent acts. But maybe that's the point of this war-torn opus, which shares little beyond the third-person viewpoint with tactical team-based titles such as SCi's *Conflict Vietnam*.

You understand, of course, that we're no experts on jungle warfare, but we imagine if Vietnam was anywhere near as kill-heavy as the battles in *Shellshock* then that would explain why so many veterans were unable to function upon their return to a normal life. The combat is very well implemented, taking place all around, over large distances and constantly second-guessing the player as to which direction to turn next. The semi-scripted nature of the battles also does a very good job of injecting a sense of movement into proceedings; you are a small individual in an extremely large conflict and you're never given cause to think the game has been designed solely around your narrative path. It's a stark contrast with last year's *Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun*, which was more like a surreal-but-colourful dream about war than an experience of conflict itself.

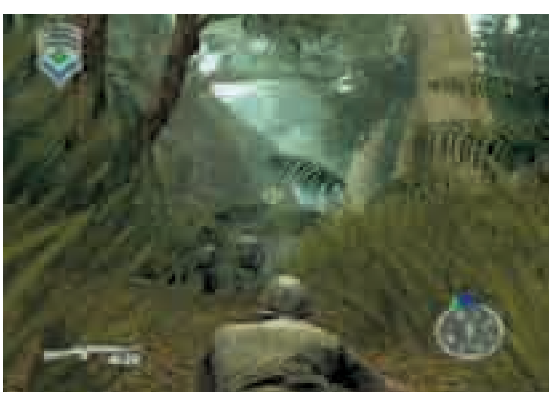
It's also almost certainly an effect heightened by the degree of violence here; where in *Rising*

FAQs

Q. JUST LIKE *CONFLICT*, YEAH?
Nope. This is more like *Medal Of Honor*, but with a shocking vein of brutality pumping through its dark heart.

Q. SO IT'S LINEAR, THEN, LIKE *MEDAL OF HONOR*?
Not as much as you'd notice – it's always frantic and varied enough in scope to not become repetitive.

Q. ANY GRUMBLES?
All those identical Vietnamese character models could be construed as 'a bit problematic'.



You can use the jungle to take cover, but you'll still feel threatened.



Hit your target and he'll explode in a disturbing shower of gore and fatigues.

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



BATTLEFIELD: VIETNAM







Sun the soldiers merely fell, here they fall, are decapitated, and often (as in the case of an enemy unlucky enough to meet a contact-sensitive grenade) are left as little more than a face and limb emerging from a pile of red goo. Again, it's an unsettling experience that causes pause for thought beyond, say, the violent murders of *Ninja Gaiden* because the men don't spray stylised jets of blood, preferring to erupt in a screaming, muddy cloud. We don't know if Guerrilla intended this degree of social context or if it just came about by happenstance, but it increases the highly immersive nature of an intense, fast-paced war title.

In fact, there are very few aspects of *Shellshock: Nam '67* that have been done to this degree of quality on consoles before, and the amount of processing power Guerrilla has managed to coax from the PS2 must be a good sign for gamers hungrily awaiting the Dutch developer's *Killzone*. Admittedly, draw distance and the inevitable misty pop-up of war are both weak at times, but are complemented by enough lush, deep foliage layered into infinity in which to lose yourself. The varied elevation of the landscape is also captured well – extending to underground tunnel networks and peasant villages – and requires plenty of moment-to-moment movement to ensure you're under the cover of fire from your allies.

games™

FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

ACTION: No team control, here – just solid, violent gaming with a bang.

WEAPON WILES: You're limited to one large firearm, 'cause they're, like, heavy, man.

Thankfully, your troops are up to the challenge; AI is impressive on both sides, and despite some instances of teammates running into avoidable friendly fire, it actually goes some way to presenting the well-oiled workings of a military unit rather than just a series of faceless, walking bullseyes. The developer has also considered the dynamic use of sound very well, with loud bangs and all sorts of muffling and ear-ringing effects compounding the already encroaching feeling that you aren't taking control of the situation any time soon. The result is a high-energy battlefield, where the VC gaily shout "you're goin' home in a body bag, GI!" while napalm rains from above.

For fans of the Oliver Stone school of war fiction, this will probably all seem vaguely familiar, but it's testament to Guerrilla's skill that *Shellshock* manages to avoid glib commentary on the events depicted, preferring to contextualise with accurate historical footage and reportage. It's certainly not the classic *Killzone* is destined to be, but nor is it a severe disappointment. It's just a shame a last-minute release-date slip means we won't see it until September.

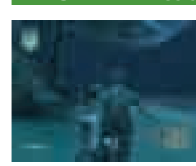
VERDICT 7/10

SMART WAR GAME THAT SHOCKS AS MUCH AS IT EXCITES

JUNGLE SHUFFLE

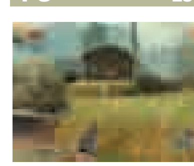
People often discuss the lurid attraction of violence in the same hushed tones that they reserve for pornography, and it's true that nothing complements the psychological violence of war like a thoroughly cathartic pic of a nude lady. It's fitting, then, that Guerrilla has thought to include a wealth of porn throughout *Shellshock: Nam '67*, from the grot-mags lying around the camp that frustrate and entice in equal measure to the pornographic playing card collection that can be assembled throughout your Vietnam tour. Not enough debauchery for you? Then by all means visit the camp's very own madame, who will gladly furnish you with a woman of disgustingly weak virtue for three or four life-affirming minutes of bliss, providing you have 'performed' well enough during the mission to earn the requisite number of bonus chits.

XBOX £39.99 SEPT '04



There's very little to separate the Xbox version from its PS2 counterpart on first inspection, aside from the standard button reconfiguration you would expect to find.

PC £34.99 SEPT '04



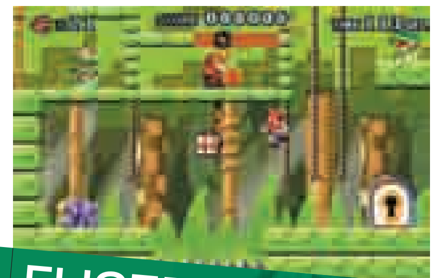
The PC version of *Shellshock* makes full use of a PC's graphics capabilities, with layers of foreground foliage and a muted colour palette adding much in the way of atmospheric reality.



■ As tough as they get, the Toy Mario sections make for some of the best moments in the game.



■ More and more elements are introduced as you progress until you're waist-deep in puzzles.



games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

BOING: Take Mario's much-loved and traditional run/jump/collect-the-items fare…

BRAINS: … and throw in a selection of increasingly devious puzzles to work through.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

MARIO VS DONKEY KONG

IT'S PLUMBER AGAINST GIANT APE ALL OVER AGAIN

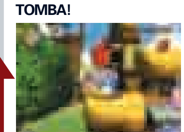
Ready for a conspiracy theory? Monkeys have hypnotic powers. How else can you explain the success of ridiculously simple games like *Super Monkey Ball* and *Ape Escape* which, we'd hazard, wouldn't have enjoyed half their success without their simian stars. Likewise, plenty of lesser titles could have pulled in more support just by throwing in an ape or two – even a gorilla would suffice in many circumstances. Either way, there's definitely something about a monkey that sends the public into a frenzy. But we digress.

Following mostly in the curiously large footprints of Game Boy title *Donkey Kong '94*, Mario's latest unashamedly pinches elements from much of the plumber's back catalogue too. Carrying and standing on items and enemies harks back to the days of *Mario Bros 2*; moves and skills are more or less straight out of *Mario 64*; and much of Mario's vocabulary is decidedly *Sunshine*. Each world is split into eight levels, the first six of which involve getting a key to a door and rescuing a Toy Mario by negotiating all manner of platforms, switches and enemies, all the while rounding up presents and Stars for score and life bonuses. (Trust us, this is a lot more mind-bending and enjoyable than it sounds.) The seventh level is notably different and features Mario leading his six mini protégés through a series of hazards to a toy box, *Krusty's Super Fun House*-style. The amount of little guys that make it through then form your energy bar of sorts for the final showdown with DK before you move to the next world.

Considering things don't really start getting taxing until the fourth or fifth world in a game that initially seems to have only six (a figure that more than doubles as you progress) this may not look like a huge title, but you really don't appreciate how evil level designers can be until the later stages – the Expert levels alone will be enough to turn GBAs into projectiles. Thankfully, the game's mechanics are consistent enough that most (if not all) outbursts will be due to human error, and the feeling of accomplishment that emerges from the wake of a particularly tough challenge makes all the hair-tearing worthwhile. You want the monkey. You need the monkey. Obey the monkey…

VERDICT 8/10
A SUBLIMELY BLENDED PLATFORM-PUZZLER

TOMBA!



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



KLONOA: EMPIRE OF DREAMS

TIME TO FLEX THOSE ULTIMATE MUSCLES ONCE MORE

KINNIKUMAN GENERATIONS

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

HARD CEL: Switching to more realistic visuals brings this in line with other wrestling games.

MORE MEN: The PlayStation2 game boasts 48 fighters. The GameCube original had just 17.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Bandai

DEVELOPER
Aki

PRICE
¥6,800

RELEASE
TBA
(Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4

Who'd have thought that the fate of the universe could be decided by blokes in spandex touching each other? It seems unlikely, but that's the premise of *Kinnikuman Generations*, the second game based on the oddly alluring Ultimate Muscle licence. Essentially, it's a wrestling game only not – regular moves are outlandish and often defy the laws of physics, while special attacks come with their own cut-scenes, which makes the game more like Aki's other brawler-cum-wrestler *Def Jam Vendetta*. Not that that's a bad thing.

Aki has used this game to bring the *Kinnikuman* series in line with other wrestling titles, changing the cel-shaded graphics of the GameCube original into more realistic rendering and adding new mat-based moves. There are also more than double the amount of characters (over 40 in total), which should provide plenty of variety, despite some being duplicates in terms of move sets. With all the improvements made over its predecessor, then, it seems a shame that *Generations*' biggest letdown is a complete lack of anything to actually do in the long term.

Yes, the line-up of modes is no less extensive than most other wrestling titles, encapsulating everything from standard matches (singles and tag) to team battles, tournaments and even a Survival mode. However, that there isn't anything resembling a Story or Career mode leaves the whole package lacking (especially against similar titles like *Smackdown! Here Comes The Pain*) and it's fairly easy to see everything the game has to



offer in a very short time. The fact that the only way to unlock many fighters is to repeatedly play through the same modes ultimately proves tiring, rather than bringing out the completist in you.

And that's a shame, because with an incentive for the lone player *Kinnikuman Generations* could have been one of the better 'not really wrestling' wrestling titles. Instead, it only shows its potential when played against friends – a fact that could have been easily corrected had Bandai given it a little more thought.

VERDICT 6/10
A SOLID GRAPPLER, IF A LITTLE POINTLESS

KINNIKUMAN NISEI



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



DEF JAM VENDETTA

Many of the moves are completely impractical and look like they *really* hurt.



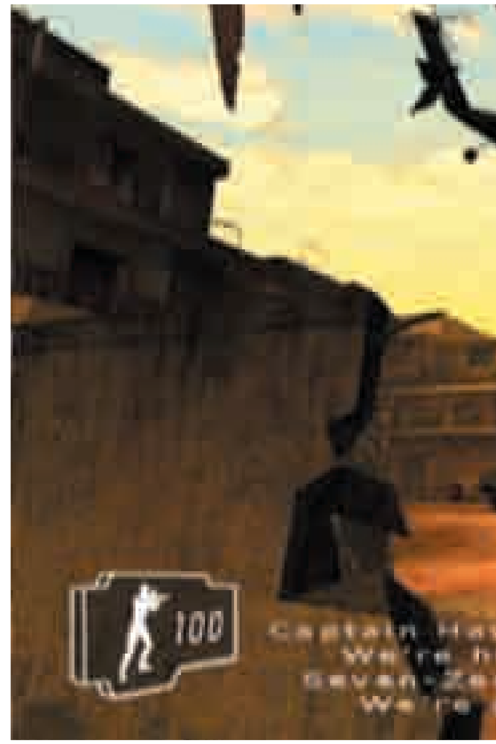




That fallen terrorist ran straight between our two so-called colleagues.



The explosions aren't that impressive, more like an old PSone game.



SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY

PLAYING AT WAR IS ONE THING, PLAYING AT MAKING GAMES IS ANOTHER MATTER

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Zombie

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-16

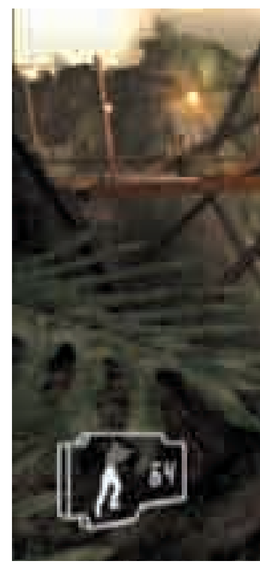
There are a lot of war-based shooters coming out this year, and most of them are Xbox bound. Many of these titles – like *Brothers In Arms* or *Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow* – appear to have a lot of potential, so hopefully they won't go the same way as *Shadow Ops: Red Mercury*, one of the most shockingly average war shooters we've ever seen. In fact, this is a perfect example of how to do a generic, by-the-numbers game. If *Shadow Ops* ever manages to surprise you then consider yourself very lucky indeed, as you certainly won't see anything here that you haven't seen before.

The opening level is a great example of lacklustre gameplay. You begin the game in a helicopter that's shot down over hostile territory. With two other men you have to clear a city block or two to rescue another downed chopper and so on. We're not massively bothered by this shameless homage to *Black Hawk Down*. However, it doesn't do the game any favours because, unlike the events of *Black Hawk Down* (or indeed *Full Spectrum Warrior*, which also borrows similar ideas), the game forces you along a very linear route. The feeling of being in a world of trouble is completely removed. The same applies to the other levels. Time after time you're forced down one route where you have to clear area after area of bad guys, occasionally partaking in a scripted event or two. Even the occasional stealth-based mission can't break the monotony. It's sometimes nice to put on a mindless action film and switch your brain off, but this isn't the case when it comes to games.

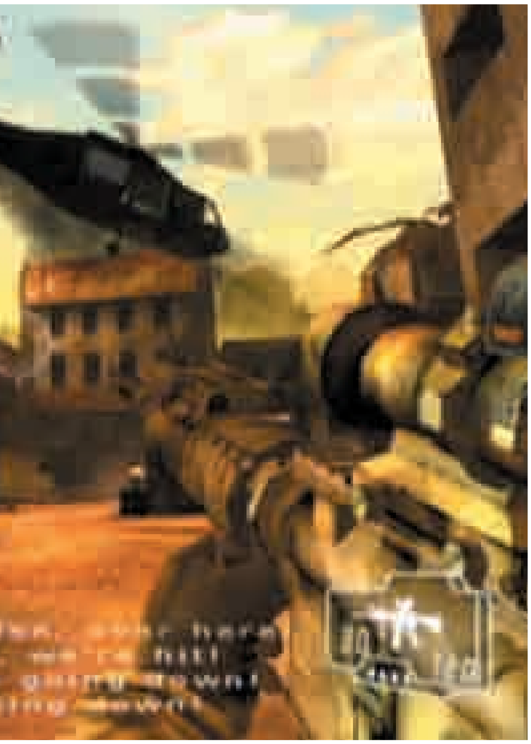
Matters aren't helped any by the so-called artificial intelligence of your teammates. For most of the game you'll have a couple of guys by your side to help you through the mission objectives – something we're all for, but only if your buddies actually think for themselves. Watching them run along preset routes and stop at the same location each time is just depressing. They don't even give that much in the way of support, almost as if they're only there for show; on several occasions we had an enemy run straight past our comrades and right up to our face.

A game like *Shadow Ops* could be improved numerous times over if you had the ability to order your men around, although we're not entirely sure where the command system would go on the pad… The control system isn't bad, it does the job more than well enough, but it just doesn't feel very natural. The zoom on the left trigger, for example, is going to confuse a lot of players used to playing pretty much any other first-person shooter.

Of course, if you do already own one or two games of this type you'll have little reason to buy this. You can't even justify a purchase for visual appeal. Considering this is supposed to be an Xbox- and PC-only title it looks very much like the development has gone ahead with the PlayStation2 in mind. The textures, character models, shadowing and suchlike wouldn't have even stretched Sony's machine. On the plus side this does mean a lack of slowdown in both the one-player game and the multiplayer modes, an area where there is actually some enjoyment to be had. The game modes on Xbox Live, although unoriginal, are worth checking out and it appears as though a lot more effort has gone



There are moments of beauty, but, sadly, as soon as you get on the bridge a mysterious bank of fog rolls in.





INTELLIGENCE ARTIFICIAL

We've talked about the poor quality of your own team's AI, but this isn't the end of the dodgy computer intelligence in *Shadow Ops*. The enemy don't appear to think at all, either. At its most extreme we came across one gentleman manning a huge anti-aircraft gun. After clearing the area of bad guys he continued to fire at the air, so we walked right up beside him, and guess what? Yep, that's right, he carried on shooting at the air ignoring the enemy soldier standing by his side with a gun pointing at his head. You have to admire a man committed to his work.

FAQs

Q. WHAT IS RED MERCURY?
A nuclear accelerant that some terrorists are threatening to use. In other words, a damn good excuse to pull the trigger. Lots.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE TEAM ORDERS?
Unfortunately not – your men act all on their own, usually along preset routes, so most of the time you have to follow them.

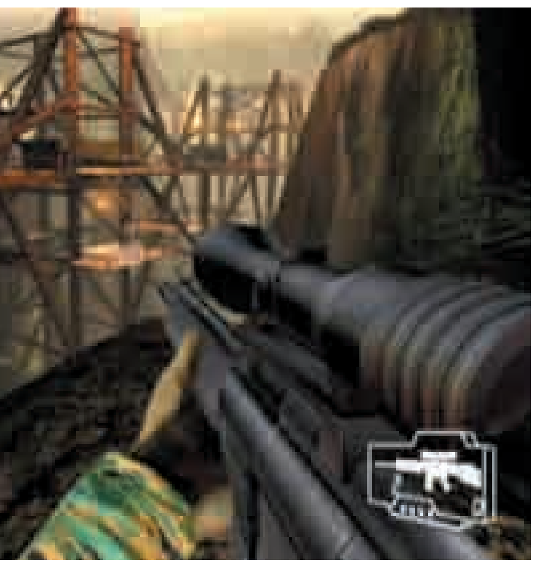
Q. IS IT ALL SHOOTING?
There are some stealth sections but the only difference here is the addition of a silencer on each of the guns.

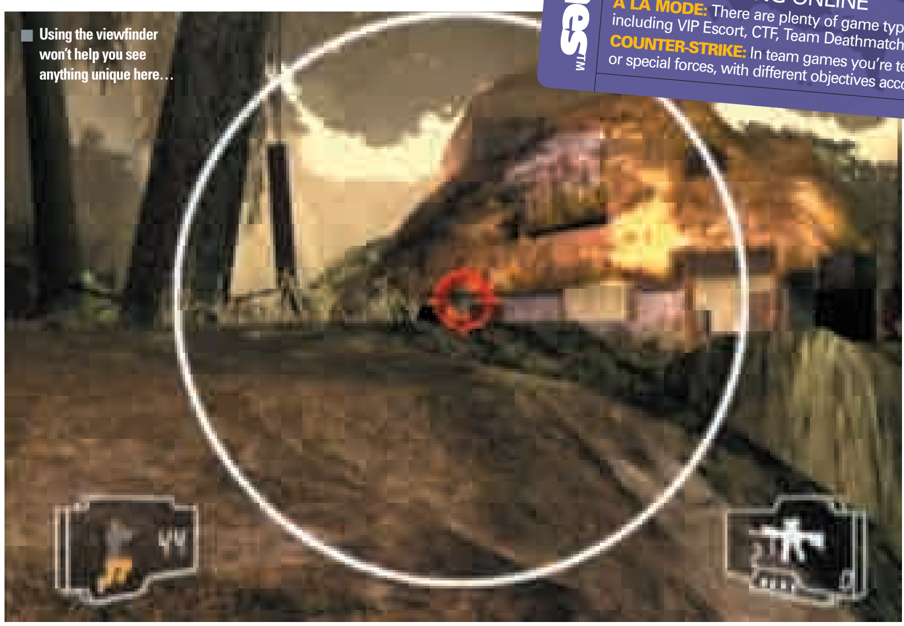
games™ **GLOBAL**

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

A LA MODE: There are plenty of game types, including VIP Escort, CTF, Team Deathmatch…

COUNTER-STRIKE: In team games you're terrorists or special forces, with different objectives accordingly.





Using the viewfinder won't help you see anything unique here…

into the map design here compared with the tiresome levels of the single-player game. As is tradition now there's also a co-op mode, which makes the main campaign almost enjoyable to play through.

Does this mean you're going to be tempted away from the likes of *Rainbow Six 3* or *Counter-Strike* for your multiplayer cravings? Simply put, no you're not. So what does that leave us with? An average single-player game with competent but not brilliant multiplayer modes tacked onto the side. You'd be much better off sticking with *Full Spectrum Warrior* for your war fix or waiting for one of the Xbox's many other combat games to be released. One thing's for sure, they can't all be as disappointing as this. Can they?

PC £29.99 Q4 '04



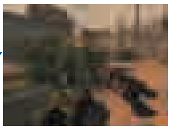
While this can offer some fun on consoles, it can only suffer on the PC. There's far too much competition on this format to justify a purchase. The only bonus is the refined control system you inherently enjoy via the keyboard and mouse.

MEDAL OF HONOR



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

VERDICT 5/10

NOTHING HERE TO TAKE THIS ABOVE AVERAGE

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Australia

PUBLISHER
Enlight

DEVELOPER
Infinite Interactive

PRICE
£29.99

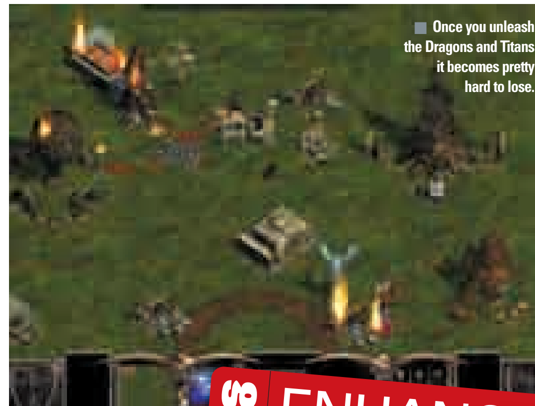
RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1(2-6 online)

MINIMUM SPEC
Intel Pentium III, 128Mb RAM, 600Mb hard drive space, DirectX 8-compatible sound card, Nvidia GeForce 2 (or ATI Radeon) graphics card



On some maps, Fog Of War is a more annoying adversary than your real opponent…



Once you unleash the Dragons and Titans it becomes pretty hard to lose.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

VARIETY: There are literally hundreds of race-specific units to construct and lead.

ONLINE: Take your fight up with a total stranger over several interesting game modes.

CARELESS ORC COSTS LIVES

WARLORDS BATTLECRY III

Decisions, decisions… Few games have thrown so many choices our way in the first few minutes as *Battlecry III*. Starting a campaign sees you picking a race/class combination (of which there are thousands) and its appearance, before a few sample missions give way to a huge world to explore, plunder, slaughter or befriend at your leisure. In fact, there's so much for you to do that it's a while before you even consider what lies beneath the game's vast and familiar surface.

But where to start? Mechanics are generally sound although the game does suffer from a few age-old problems – AI swings wildly from one-man offensives to unstoppable hordes only seconds into play, and visuals could easily pass for off-cuts from the previous game. On the flipside, you'll get a wonderfully arrogant musical score and all manner of other sonic treats for your pennies, not to mention a well-blended recipe of RPG progression, RTS action and resource management with far more content than the game's single-CD format would suggest. In fact, if you stick with it, there's a long and varied Campaign mode that goes beyond the call of duty by offering diplomacy, depth and involvement on top of the expected series of battles.

Within maps, extra missions can be taken from certain shrines.



The game's tagline speaks volumes; calling *Battlecry III* "The original role-playing strategy game" is a fine way of declaring the game's legacy, but at the same time it highlights just how little has really changed since the first title was released. Sure, you've got a little more of everything to play around with but this game feels like it could easily have been released four or five years ago. Again, this isn't necessarily a bad thing, but when you consider how many of the RTS superpowers are available for less than a tenner you realise just how cut-throat a genre this really is and why releases into it are so rare.

Curiosity to see the impressive Titan units should be enough to glean a few hours of enjoyment from *Battlecry III*, but after that you'll more than likely drift back to an old classic rather than persevering with this. Dwarf or Dark Elf, Necromancer or Deathknight, *Warlords* or *WarCraft*… This is a game of decisions and some are easier to make than others.

VERDICT 5/10
GENERALLY COMPETENT BUT UNDENIABLY DATED

ALIEN VS PREDATOR: EXTINCTION



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



WARCRAFT III

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Arcade

OTHER FORMATS
Neo Geo AES

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SNK Playmore

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£1 per play

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

PUT THE SALT AWAY – IT'S REALLY NOT THAT BAD

METAL SLUG 5

It's a rare occurrence, but there are some games that follow the formula of a series so closely it can be hard to convey whether it's better or worse than its predecessors to anyone other than the hardcore contingent. Unfortunately, *Metal Slug 5* is a perfect example of such a game; compare the images here to the PS2 review of *Metal Slug 3* back in issue 8 and we doubt anyone bar the most dedicated follower of the series would be able to tell the difference.

So the fact there have been some changes (particularly after the shambolic rehash that was *Metal Slug 4*) might come as a surprise. In theory, it shouldn't be all that tough to make each game as good as the last; unsurprisingly, though, it's not quite that simple. While *Metal Slug 5* certainly isn't a bad game, it still falls some way short of delivering a package that can be heralded as the best example of the series so far.

Obviously, it goes without saying that the traditional visual style of the series has been retained, but whereas *Metal Slug 4* simply reused old sprites and backgrounds from earlier versions, *Metal Slug 5* manages to offer almost entirely new takes on everything. On top of different enemies and locations, you've also got two new vehicles and even a slide move that comes in handy for dodging enemy fire, although it would have been nice if the level design had made more use of this feature.

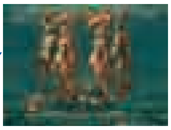
However, minor improvements don't go so far as to cover up some other notable absences from earlier *Metal Slug* games. The game's five levels, for instance, are over all too quickly – a matter made worse by a distinct lack of multiple routes that can be taken through each – and many of the different 'states' that your character can be put into (such as a zombie, a mummy or even a monkey) have also been removed. That, coupled with the fact that the plot (what little there is of it) doesn't hang together, makes it feel like a bit of a rush job on SNK's part rather than a proper attempt to rebuild the reputation of the series.

Sadly, that's exactly what SNK needs to do if it wants to continue making *Metal Slug* games without drawing scornful comments from its dedicated followers. Without them, the audience for 2D games like this might dry up… And then where would we be?

VERDICT 6/10
FUN, BUT NOT FRESH ENOUGH TO BEST ITS FOREBEARS

METAL SLUG 4

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

METAL SLUG 3



SNK has certainly managed to innovate with a few things in this fifth instalment, but it still doesn't feel as fresh as previous incarnations.


Despite being replaced in *Metal Slug 4*, Tarma and Eri are back as playable characters rather than just appearing in the background.



Many of the tried-and-tested vehicles makes a welcome return once more, from the often-seen Tank Slug to the more agile Slug Sub.

games™ **ENHANCED**
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
NEW FACES: With Morden's troops out of the picture, new enemy the Ptolemaic Army is a welcome addition.
ADDED EXTRAS: You'll find some new vehicles, as well as a special slide ability to help avoid enemy fire.



Coming in from the sea can take your enemies by surprise.



When you get 150 people storming around the Indonesian undergrowth things can get hectic, and confusing if you're not with friends.



You won't stay hidden for long with 75 people out looking for you…

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Novalogic

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-150

MINIMUM SPEC
DirectX 9.0 video card, Pentium III, 1.5Gb hard disk space, 256Mb RAM, 56k modem

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

DELTA FORCE HEADS ONLINE TO DO BATTLE WITH THOSE PESKY EA REBELS

Although online gaming has been de rigueur for PC gamers for years, they've been rather slow to take to large-scale multiplayer shooters. That all changed with EA's *Battlefield 1942*, and other developers have followed suit as the fun of having a hundred players involved in a team battle became obvious. Novalogic is no stranger to the first-person shooter, having championed *Delta Force* for years. As such, *Joint Operations* takes the good elements of the middle-of-the-road shooter series, adds a few twists, and takes it online with considerable success.

Set in Indonesia, the game pits an international peace-keeping force against local rebels… and that's pretty much all you'll need to know story-wise, save for the fact that those playing as the peace-keeping force can be different troops from around the world, including Delta Force and the SAS. It makes little difference to how the game plays, however, as the Indonesian rebels have very similar weapons at their disposal and will be able to employ similar tactics too – the balancing of the game has been kept simple in order to allow the gameplay to take centre stage. In a nutshell, sides of up to 75 gamers take to the battlefield, aiming to blow the hell out of the opposition using a variety of weapons and vehicles. It may sound easy to get that right, but Novalogic delivers a gaming experience that's every bit as fun as it sounds.

To begin with, there are plenty of different weapons to use, and different classes to play as. Who the player chooses to be will greatly affect the experience that they will have, not to mention the role they play in battle. Sneaky snipers can arm themselves with telescopic sights and look in on the action from afar, picking off exposed enemies, while those of a more gung-ho persuasion may prefer to charge in, machine-guns blazing. The truly altruistic gamers out there can even assume the role of a medic, administering first aid to wounded troops and thus saving them the hassle of respawning back at their base.

Then there's the plethora of vehicles at each team's disposal. As with the weapons, these vary depending on which side you're playing as but the differences really are negligible, and both

FAQs

Q. HOW IS TEAMWORK ENCOURAGED?
Points are awarded not only for kills, but also for dropping comrades into the battlezone.

Q. WHERE ARE THE SERVERS?
Servers are located both in the UK and the US, so finding a busy game is a breeze.

Q. WHAT'S INDONESIA LIKE?
The game features a variety of terrain types, from dense jungle to guerrilla warfare in abandoned villages.

GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

ONE-MAN NO-NO: As with similar games, the offline campaign is limited to training missions only.

MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM: Head into Novaworld, however, and you can play with up to 150 gamers.



Mastering the vehicles available is absolutely vital if you're going to come out on top.



Camouflage is so good that you'll stumble into a few foes by mistake.





The Joint Ops team sweeps into town in typically understated fashion.



The key locations in the game are designed with epic battles in mind.

teams will be able to draw on armoured carriers, helicopters, jeeps fitted with weapons and so on. Of course, all the weapons and vehicles in the world won't save a game that isn't inherently good fun to play, but *Joint Operations* promises to keep players coming back for more thanks to an impressive amount of maps (some up to 50-square kilometres in size) as well as four different gameplay modes.

Of course, no game is perfect. Admittedly, some of the niggles here are not the fault of the game – more of an emerging genre that's struggling to find its feet – but they do lower the enjoyment factor a little. For instance, 75-a-side battles sound fun, but are actually pretty chaotic. Very few clans are likely to reach such a size, so gamers will often play with strangers, and in such large numbers it's impossible to work as a team. What invariably happens is that everyone attacks, then everyone realises no-one is defending, so everyone defends, before realising no-one is attacking… and so on.

Teamwork, therefore, is not easy and, considering the vast size of many of the maps, the intelligent gameplay mechanics that ensure defence is just as important as attack actually work against *Joint Operations* in some situations. The same can also be said for the sight-line which is an impressive one kilometre. Though a great idea in principle, this does mean that snipers will have a huge bearing on how the game plays as they can hide some distance from the action and it can take a long time for their position to be pinpointed; how this matter will be balanced in the future remains to be seen, but it's a problem waiting to happen.

Single-player mode is sadly limited to a series of tutorials that will frustrate solo players, but with the emphasis being mostly on online play, these niggles will only frustrate those who don't know what they're getting into. Ultimately, *Joint Operations* is attempting to be a ballsy, fast-paced, large-scale multiplayer shooter, and it succeeds comfortably.

VERDICT 8/10

THE BEST GAME OF ITS KIND CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG TO ME

Attacking enemy bases while defending your own is the crux of *Joint Operations*, and the different game modes are all modelled on this basic premise. Our favourite is undoubtedly the Advance And Secure mode, where you'll fight for a string of checkpoints. The battle ebbs and flows as each side looks to take the next checkpoint without losing the one they have just taken. Dead troops can spawn as far forward or back in their own chain of checkpoints as they wish, and with helicopters screaming in to drop troops into the battlezone against the deafening roar of anti-aircraft fire, the experience really is rather awesome indeed.

BATTLEFIELD: VIETNAM



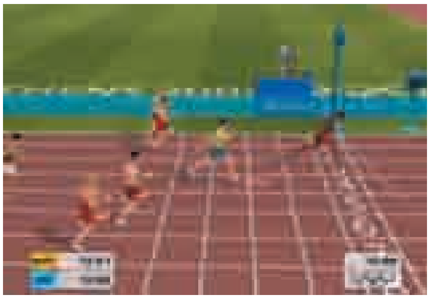
BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE



BATTLEFIELD: VIETNAM

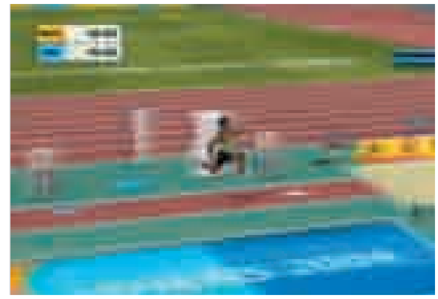
eMag



The end of the race means either the glory of victory or the agony of defeat – but always the pain of your tired fingers.



The first-person view for the 1,500m event adds a unique twist to track racing, letting you 'be', er, Steve Ovett or someone like that…



Witness 'triple-jump time' as the game slows down to give you a fair chance of nailing the timing.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Eurocom

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
July '04

PLAYERS
1-4

ATHENS 2004

THE OFFICIAL OLYMPICS LICENCE MINUS THE BOMB THREATS AND UNFINISHED STADIA

While only time will tell if the organisers of Athens 2004 can recover the global sports showcase from its haphazard build-up, the verdict for the digital games is definitely more positive. While this isn't a photo-perfect Xerox of the actual games, it's an exhaustive compendium of Olympic sports and the competitive spirit of the event has been perfectly replicated.

Traditionally, games based on the Olympics have been happy to follow in *Track & Field*'s footsteps and stick to button-bashing as a means of building speed and power. So it's pleasing to see that *Athens 2004* makes a genuine attempt to break the mould and inject variation into the controls, as building speed can also be done by twirling the analog sticks or with well-timed button presses. Other control methods try to map their subject matter to the DualShock2, such as the Rings event where the analog sticks mirror the gymnast's arms, and the High Jump with two buttons for each foot. With 25 events, there are inevitably some recurring themes but the abundance of games makes this pardonable.

It's also the number of events that makes the occasional spike in difficulty forgivable. Lurching from undemanding (1,500m) to implausibly tough (Skeet Shooting), *Athens 2004* suffers from lop-sided balance yet it's easy to recover lost points on another discipline in which you specialise. Again, the diversity of events comes to the rescue and prevents frustration kicking in. The introduction of human opposition helps iron out these kinks as the competitive element is pushed to the fore and the pursuit of new world records becomes secondary to finishing ahead of those sitting around you. It was inevitable that *Athens 2004* would shine when combined with a multi-tap, and it's no surprise that this is best enjoyed with three other people huddling around the television vying for the best performance.

It's only the aesthetics that truly let *Athens 2004* down. With a clean, unfussy menu system, it's disappointing to find this gives way to rough in-game visuals and limited animation. The commentary is also a little too repetitive to add to the atmosphere and at times seems to have scant correlation with what's happening on screen. This has long been the bane of sports commentating and, sadly, *Athens 2004* is no different. Nevertheless, the substandard veneer doesn't dim the shine of the gameplay, with Eurocom doing a better job of conveying the excitement of the Olympics than the organisers in Athens are managing right now.

games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

HOT STEPPER: The Women's Floor Exercises event works like *Dance Dance Revolution*, relying on timing.
MARATHON NOT SPRINT: The 1,500m ditches button-bashing for tactical energy management.

VERDICT 7/10
UGLY VICTORY RATHER THAN BEAUTIFUL DEFEAT

ESPN INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD



BETTER THAN

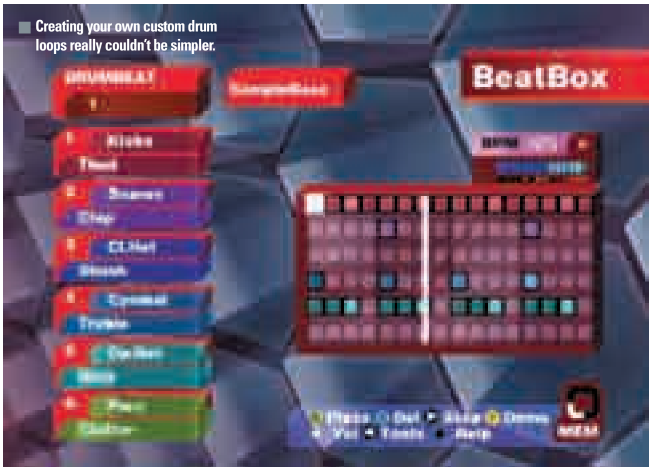
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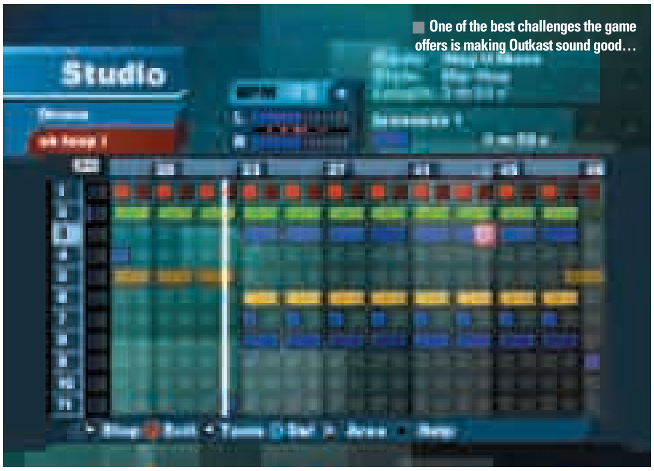
TRACK & FIELD

No running, no ducking, no diving, no pushing and certainly no petting.





Creating your own custom drum loops really couldn't be simpler.



One of the best challenges the game offers is making Outkast sound good…

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3: THIS IS THE REMIX

SUPERSTAR DJ, HERE WE GO

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Codemasters

DEVELOPER
Mix Max

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1


MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

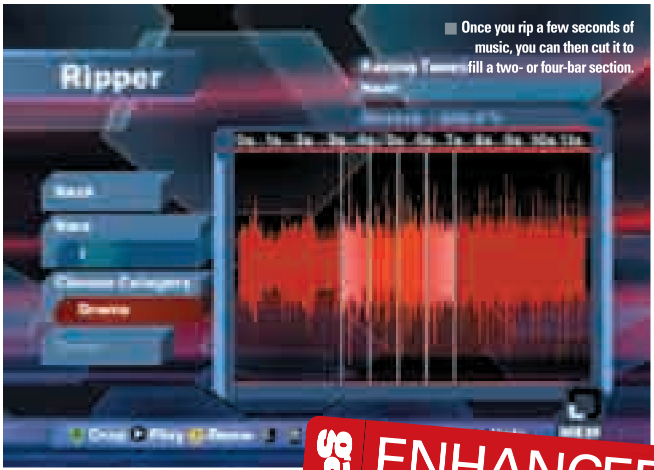
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN


MUSIC 3000

It's not often that we get to refer to a console title as a program rather than a game. In fact, this generation has been a lot less ripe for such releases compared to the last, when the PSone in particular enjoyed all manner of music- and game-creation software. Perhaps it was the slight rise and all-but-inevitable fall of the Net Yaroze system that warned developers away from the genre. Regardless, Codemasters (one of the leaders in the field) has returned to the genre with the additional processing power of the PS2 and Xbox, and the results are every bit as enjoyable as you might expect. Offering some 3,000 free samples and more virtual tracks than you'll ever need, as well as the option to create (or have the program generate) hooks or drum loops, and even pull samples from whatever shameful noise you may have dumped on your Xbox hard drive, this is possibly the most refined console music title that doesn't require a peripheral to make it so.

The one real flaw that mars *MTV Music Generator 3* is the reliance on the base song within your mix. Once you pick one of the ten tunes to mix, you're more or less fixed to using the samples and tempo associated with it, and while pulling short clips off your hard drive soundtracks and the fairly solid Beatbox/Melody generators relieves this somewhat, it'd be nice to have free run of all of the samples with which to make your mix. That said, the title does offer features and functionality (for Xbox owners, at least) that can only otherwise be obtained through pricey PC software, and the fact that a console title can even approach this kind of professional software has left us particularly impressed.



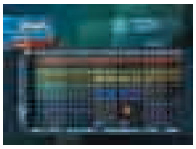
Once you rip a few seconds of music, you can then cut it to fill a two- or four-bar section.

It's clear that this package is aimed at those who might not usually consider buying this kind of thing (hence the high-profile MTV branding) so the fact that it doesn't topple genre leader *Music 3000* – a much more complicated affair that, with a little time investment, is ultimately more rewarding – is hardly a surprise. But as the more user-friendly and high-profile of the two titles, we're expecting big things from *MTV Music Generator 3*. It's only right that at least one of these great games gets the recognition it deserves.

games™ ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
RIP: Take brief samples from your hard-disk soundtracks to mix with your beats.
CREATE: Make all-new licks, riffs and beats from scratch for a unique track.

VERDICT 7/10
A FEW GRIPES TARNISH AN OTHERWISE GREAT PACKAGE

PS2 £39.99 OUT NOW


Taking samples from audio CDs as opposed to hard disk isn't quite as practical, but apart from that (and a few slightly longer loading times), the overall package is largely identical.

THE BRAINS BEHIND CHAMP MANAGER TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO ICE HOCKEY

NHL EASTSIDE HOCKEY MANAGER

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
Sports Interactive

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

MINIMUM SPEC
300Mb hard disk space, DirectX 8.1-compatible sound card, Pentium III 600MHz, 96Mb RAM (128Mb on Windows 2000/XP)

When it comes to football management, Sports Interactive is king of the castle. The various incarnations of the seminal *Championship Manager* have knocked the opposition into a cocked hat without even breaking sweat. That said, it's always been a little puzzling that the company hasn't attempted to branch out into other sports – until now.

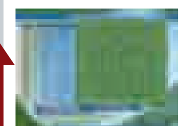
NHL Eastside Hockey Manager is effectively *Champ Manager* for hockey. Of course, the limited appeal of the subject matter – in this country, at least – means that it will never scale the same heights as *Champ Manager* in terms of sales, but as far as ice hockey management games go, this is the mutt's nuts. The latest stats are all present and correct and the game feels every bit as deep as we've come to expect from SI, but it isn't beginner friendly; you'll need to know your ice hockey onions to stand any chance of understanding what's going on. The option to ask the assistant manager to pick the team and make recommendations is one that comes in handy to start with, but there's no substitute for standing on your own two feet and calling the shots.

Ice hockey is a much faster-moving game than football, and the frequent substitutions are hard to replicate accurately, but this is side-stepped before the action starts by allowing the player to select line-ups for every situation. As the game progresses, these changes are made automatically. Although you can get more involved and make every decision manually, to do so would require an IQ of several million and a willingness to pause the game every 15 seconds or so.

It's here that *NHL Eastside Hockey Manager* falls short of greatness, though through no fault of its own. There's just no way to avoid selecting teams to deal with certain pre-set situations and, as such, the feeling of involvement is greatly diminished. A squad of 20 players will all be involved in every match, so resting players or making tactical switches can't be done to the same degree as in football-management sims, resulting in a game that's not as engaging. There's no doubt that this is a fine hockey-management game; the question is, how much fun can a hockey-management game really be?

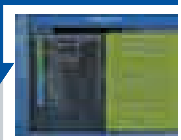
VERDICT 6/10
IF HOCKEY WERE FUN, THIS WOULD BE A CLASSIC

PRO RUGBY MANAGER

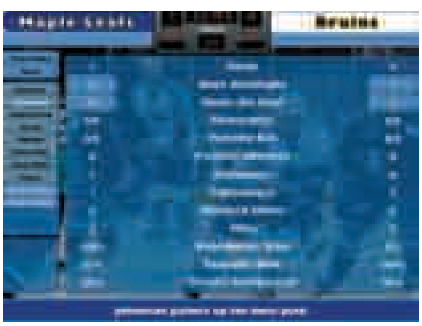


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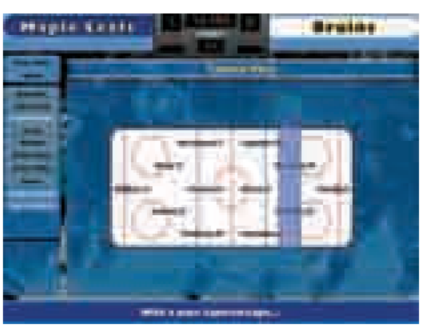
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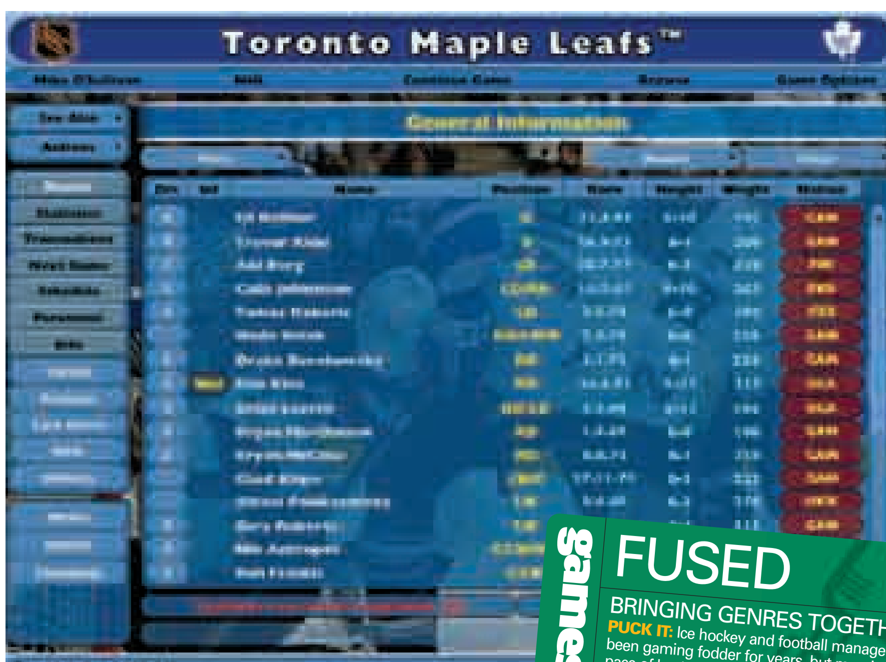
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 03/04



The visuals will be familiar to any *Champ Manager* fans.



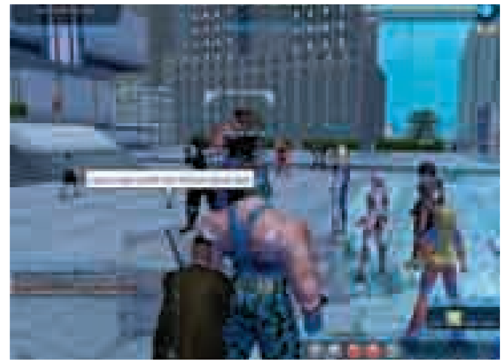
Keep an eye on the action with this view. None more action-packed.



There they are – your preposterously named gang of skating wrestlers.

games™ FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
PUCK IT: Ice hockey and football management have been gaming fodder for years, but merging the fast pace of hockey with the more sedate management experience makes for an interesting and unique title.





Once you've got enough experience, you need to visit a trainer in one of the city blocks to increase your hero's level and earn additional powers.





It's a good idea to bring other heroes along when fighting several villains – there's no 'I' in 'sidekick'. No, wait…



CITY OF HEROES

WHO SAID WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO?

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
NCSoft

DEVELOPER
Cryptic Studios

PRICE
$49.99 (plus $14.95 a month subscription, first month free)

RELEASE
TBA (US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
Massively Multiplayer

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III 800Mhz processor, 256Mb RAM, 2Gb hard disk space, 56k internet connection, 64Mb DirectX 9-compatible graphics card,

In a market where progress is everything, can a genre be stripped back to basics and still be a success? In the case of massively multiplayer online role-playing games, you'd expect the answer to be a resounding 'no' – particularly as the more hardcore MMORPG gamer seems to revel in complex economic systems, guilds and other elements that can alienate those who don't dedicate themselves to the cause. However, with the genre becoming fettered by the limitations of having so many games yet so few innovations (not to mention the increasing complexities contained within), it's refreshing that one of the most simplistic MMORPGs of recent times is also one of the most enjoyable.

It's also surprising that despite having a rather obvious comic-book premise, *City Of Heroes* stands alone among the crowd of cookie-cutter medieval-styled fantasies and deep-space epics. Set in the sprawling metropolis of Paragon City, your task as a superhero is easy: fight crime, keep the peace and generally represent the forces of good. Exactly what kind of superhero you are (from your powers to the cut of your spandex) is all part of the fun; indeed, creating your character is a challenge in itself thanks to the huge amount of detail that you can go into – the likelihood of meeting someone even remotely similar is pretty slim.



Forming a team is the best way to accomplish missions, although the difficulty increases with the team's size.

LINEAGE II



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



STAR WARS: GALAXIES



THAT'S JUST SUPER

How your hero develops their powers as they level up is entirely up to you, although your initial choices at the creation stage do set them down one of several paths. Deciding on your character's origin (Mutant, Magic, Science, Technology or Nature) and class (long-range Blaster, up-close Scrapper, hulking Tanker, buffing Defender or tactical Controller) brings an additional list of powers to choose from, each of which can then be modified. Each has their own benefits and the combinations are almost limitless; however, you have to make your choices wisely, as there's no turning back once you hit the streets of Paragon City.

FAQs

Q. COMPLICATED?
MMORPGs traditionally appeal to the more dedicated PC gamer, but everything here is easy to understand and allows veterans and newcomers to get into it immediately.

Q. BORING?
There's certainly a small element of level-grinding, but the same could be said of all MMORPGs.

Q. CAN I BE BAD?
Afraid not. Player Vs Player combat is out too, as heroes aren't meant to fight each other. However, there's an add-on pack on the way (entitled *City Of Villains*) that's set to change all that.





What's also very fresh is Cryptic's decision to remove many of the concepts that have become the norm for a modern MMORPG, at least in the forms that everyone is used to. For instance, *City Of Heroes* succeeds in bringing action back to fighting. Rather than just choosing a target, commanding your hero to attack and sitting back until someone falls over, you have to balance the use of your numerous powers and basic brawling with Endurance (which goes down each time you use a power) and the relevant recharge, not to mention concentrating on activating them at the right time.

There's also the fact that *City Of Heroes* has virtually no economy system, with what is there revolving solely around the individual, as opposed to characters amassing items to sell to the highest bidder. 'Items' are limited to two types – Enhancements (specific upgrades that can be attached to your powers) and Inspirations (single-use powers that temporarily improve your abilities) – and while these can be 'bought' from your contacts using Influence points (earned by defeating enemies), that's as far as the economy goes. Trading Enhancements and Inspirations with other players is geared towards a willingness to help each other out rather than a need to feel you've made a profit, which maintains an air of co-operation. Indeed, it's this idea of 'playing for the team' that makes *City Of Heroes* highly enjoyable.

While there have been those who've knocked Cryptic for not allowing Player Vs Player battles, it seems these critics have missed the point. Certainly, one of the game's strongest points (and again, something that sets it apart from most other MMORPGs) is that playing the role of the lone vigilante is entirely possible, as many encounters adjust themselves according to your situation. However, there's also a very accessible vein of team-play running through the game. Forming a rag-tag band of heroes couldn't be easier – a couple of clicks on a menu and you're away – but what makes things even better is that there's always plenty of team spirit to go round. Most players seem happy to lend a hand, rather than wanting to know what's in it for them, which makes taking on missions even more enjoyable. Once you've reached a certain level, you can even join or lead your own super-group, or recruit a fellow hero as your sidekick; all perks of the superhero job.

Despite still being very much in its infancy, *City Of Heroes* is the shot in the arm that the genre so desperately needed. Thanks to some extremely accessible gameplay it's a title that appeals to old hands and newcomers alike. That the game shows such potential this early in its lifespan is extremely encouraging, but it's the promise of things to come really that seals the deal. Despite Blizzard's *World Of Warcraft* and Square Enix's *Final Fantasy XII* looming on the horizon for UK MMORPG fans, we reckon Paragon City will be teeming with budding superheroes for a long time to come.

games™ FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
GRAND THEFT HERO: The layout of Paragon City and its suburbs is reminiscent of Rockstar's epic.
DIABLO-ICAL: Exploring interiors and carrying out missions will be familiar to fans of Blizzard's classic.

VERDICT 8/10
THE MOST ACCESSIBLE MMORPG WE'VE SEEN IN AGES

We're not exaggerating when we say that the dialogue will make you tear your eyes out. Well, maybe just a little, but it can get phenomenally annoying.



For all that hip talk, this is still essentially a game about battling playing cards…





As with all Sonic Team games, you'll learn how to play *as* you play, rather than getting any real guidance.



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
Sonic Team

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

PHANTASY STAR

CARDS AT THE READY… AND TRY TO AVOID PAPER CUTS



The grids you fight over range from huge to the board equivalent of a minor squabble. Surely we can work this out the gentlemanly way?



Take this online and it's all about fighting, not co-operation.



There's some nice good/evil moral blurring with the characters.

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

HUNTER'S LICENCE: To play online you'll need to pay a monthly charge into SEGA's coffers. However, this fee does let you play *Episodes I & II* as well, so it's not entirely bad.

ONLINE EPISODE III: C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION

The history of *Phantasy Star Online* should be well known to anyone who's been into videogames for the last few years. The original Dreamcast title was the first of its kind, with its ability to allow players from all over the world to hook up and form close relationships while battling all manner of strange beasts on a curiously Earth-like planet. There are numerous reasons for its success, but we believe that the mix of long- and short-range fighting styles in which each player could specialise allowed for basic but interesting tactics. There was no feeling quite like watching a friend run into a group of Hildebears with his sword swinging high while you sniped from afar, only to watch him fall to his knees and witness another warrior from your group run out and administer medicine. Of course, it wasn't long before it became every man for himself, and this is what ruined the Dreamcast adventure for many – but while it was there, it was gaming nirvana.

So here's Sonic Team hoping to work its magic with the series once more. However, this *PSO* outing is a departure from the norm. Instead of tearing around as a group and scrapping it out with weapons, you take on each other across a grid and lay down cards in an effort to decide who has the brightest laser. Think of it like Top Trumps but with more rules and not quite as much fun. Ignoring the online component for now, the single-player game proves to be an improvement on the old *PSO* titles, at least in a structural sense. Instead of a loose story based around a vague idea that's never properly formed, we have a real, actual, intriguing storyline with honest-to-god twists and cliffhangers, all presented through hammy dialogue and well-drawn cut-scenes. What's more, you can also play the game from both viewpoints of the story, and as in real life, the conflict is filled with characters who all think they're doing the right thing; for once, there's no clear-cut 'evil' nonsense – very refreshing for a videogame storyline.

It's when you go online that things don't sit right. Whereas before, *PSO* was a joy to play simply because everyone wanted to help each other (we're talking about when it first arrived, obviously) and meeting a high-level character was genuinely exciting, the only reason to go online now is to get better cards through fighting each other. The whole tone of the game has shifted; it's no longer a community, just a vast gladiatorial arena. We know that this will appeal to some people, and in the context of a different game this probably wouldn't even be an issue, but this is *Phantasy Star Online*. It doesn't feel right to be fighting other people. Maybe we'll just have to get used to it.

But let's not forget the actual battling – after all, this is the meat of the game. If you've played another other console card game before then you'll already know what to do. The system is moderately easy to understand, with your standard attack, defence and movement elements. Thankfully, it does provide a relatively large amount of scope for tactics, this being a result of the system only allowing for a limited number of powerful cards to be used, based on how much of your energy they soak up (your energy itself being defined by a dice roll at the start of a battle). This also means that every one of your cards has its place. It feels balanced and well thought-out, though if you've never liked the genre before then you won't find anything here to convert you. So far so good… But the pace. There aren't enough expletives in every language put together to express the torture that is the computer selecting a card, placing it on the board, then giant letters swooshing about the screen informing you for the seventy-fifth time that it's your turn. Yes, we know. We've done this before. No, really, we don't need to know that the computer is about to place a card down. Even the most patient of saints would have thrown the controller at the wall…

All told, we're guessing you already know if you're going to buy this. It's slow, sometimes thoughtful, gripping when you're not stuck on a battle, but eventually it will feel like an utter waste of time. There are better card games out there (generally on the GBA) and the *Phantasy Star Online* licence doesn't give the game anything that couldn't be found elsewhere. While not being entirely awful, we can't help but suggest leaving this one be… Unless you play *Magic: The Gathering* and own a beard of vast magnitude and great bushiness.

VERDICT 5/10

YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITH A REAL DECK OF CARDS

WHO TO CHOOSE?

There are two groups to play as – we'll call them the Light Side and the Dark Side. Of course any good Jedi out there will immediately plump for the Light Side as they get the weapons and honourable poses, but we must insist that you instead try your hand with the Sith. Instead of using weapons (which act as shields when a Light Side chump takes a hit), you get to set down monsters that then have to be moved about manually. This is a lot more fun because things are much tougher as you have to concentrate on keeping your monsters alive as well as yourself, and, as we said, Light Side people can just soak up the hits with their weapons. The Dark Side also gets a better story, but we'll leave it to you to find out why…

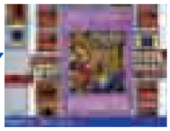


BUS STOP



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



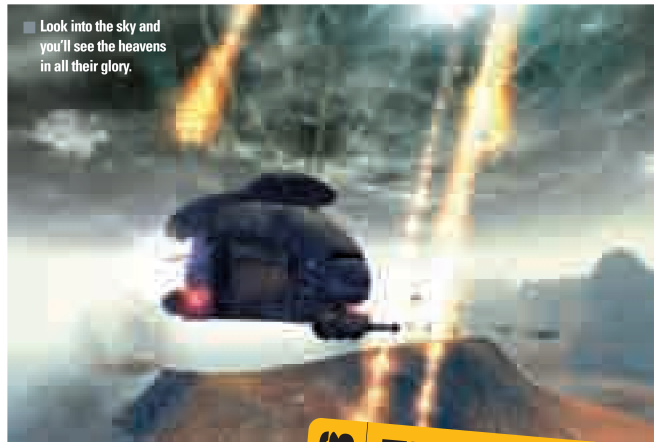
YU-GI-OH! WCT 2004

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY CARDS?
Each deck contains 30 cards, which isn't a lot. 'Balance' is the word to keep in mind when editing your roster.

Q. IS THERE A STORY THIS TIME?
Instead of the excuse for violence that was the original *PSO*, this time you've got a strong story to explore.

Q. IS THIS JUST ANOTHER CARD GAME?
Yes. Despite the licence, this feels like any other card game available on any home console.


Look into the sky and you'll see the heavens in all their glory.

I'M FLOATING IN A MOST PECULIAR WAY…

GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Sweden

PUBLISHER
Vivendi Universal

DEVELOPER
Massive

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-3

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III/AMD Athlon 800MHz, 128Mb RAM, 1.5Gb hard disk space, 32Mb graphics card

The PC has seen hundreds of RTS games, and all have followed the same pattern: start off with three or four units, harvest some resources, build an army and attack your neighbours. With the release of the original *Ground Control* this changed somewhat, with you being given a specific number and type of troops for each mission. People loved it. Now the sequel is out, and with it something new…

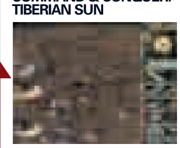
Instead of spending your time building factories and churning out troops, this is a far more streamlined affair, relying on you taking over Landing and Victory Zones. This then allows you to call in your upgradeable Dropship to deliver fresh soldiers, which are bought with Acquisition Points. You start off with just a handful of Points but gain more by holding the Victory and Landing Zones for certain lengths of time. It's certainly an improvement over the usual structure, and rewards the more tactical thinker rather than those with the fastest mouse. It also means that you'll find yourself scrapping over a few metres of ground, which feels uneasily true to life.

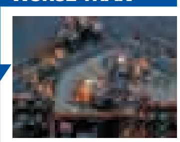
Visually, however, this isn't up to much. The first game was hailed for its 3D graphics, and although this follows the same ethos and remains technically impressive, artistically it's too generic. The same power-suited marines tear through the same fire-razed, muddy ground. The aliens are the usual reptile beings with the same raspy voices, and, well, the technology is too familiar. It's 2741 and people are still physically pointing things at what they want to destroy, radars are still in use and power stations are needed to gather energy. The whole thing comes across as typical contemporary sci-fi and the game universe is unlikely to capture the imagination.

Despite being a relatively original take on the RTS genre, this suffers from the same problems that have been around since *Command & Conquer* – eventually you'll just throw masses of troops at your opponent, hoping for the best. Even in the second half of the game, when playing as the evil Viron who meld together to create different troops, you'll end up using the same tactics. Ultimately, it means that while *Ground Control II* will undoubtedly appeal to RTS fanatics (they'll enjoy the lack of resource collecting that's usually so infuriating) everyone else will wonder exactly where the appeal lies.

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
HOSTILE: There are two races to play as – humans and the Viron. They're bitter enemies to begin with…
TAKEOVER: Unlike most RTS titles, you don't need to set up bases, just capture and use them.

VERDICT 5/10
AN RTS WITH A TWIST BUT NOT ENOUGH EXCITEMENT

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

STARCRAFT

If you're after eye candy, you'll find plenty to please once the battles get going.




That's right, the Viron (the aliens) have guns just like ours.



Leave the enemies alone and they'll rapidly fill the screen, so get busy with that trigger finger.



Never let it be said that this isn't a faithful port – even the slowdown survives the conversion process.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Starfish

DEVELOPER
Hot-B

PRICE
£29.99 (Import)

RELEASE
TBC

PLAYERS
1

"LOOK – IT'S THE GOODYEAR BLIMP!"

STEEL EMPIRE

Since its launch, the Game Boy Advance has become a portal through which forgotten games can be given new life. From repackaged Nintendo heroes to more curious choices – the category into which this oddity falls – the number of titles that have been given a second wind in the handheld market is astonishing. What's perhaps more surprising are some of the choices that have been made in resurrecting old games – developers and publishers are perfectly happy to throw games like *Aero The Acrobat* and *Rock 'N' Roll Racing* back onto the shelves while classics like *Rocket Knight Adventures* and *UN Squadron* seem unlikely to ever leave their chunky cartridges. And so it continues with this forgotten Mega Drive shoot-'em-up…

The game's theme and presentation are impressive to a point – hushed tones and colours give it a good feel of antiquity (given its 19th Century setting) but the general lack of vibrancy soon seems misplaced in a genre famous for its reliance on lavish visuals. Attention then turns to the fundamentals, the other area in which a shooter can earn its keep. Despite a few neat ideas (two fire buttons to shoot left or right and a pair of significantly different craft), this can never even hope to lock horns with the big guns of the genre (no pun intended) such as *Thunder Force* or *R-Type*. In addition, the difficulty level is artificially raised by sections or bosses where you can't help but take damage. While there are a handful of stand-out moments, even these can't push the overall product anywhere above average. And herein lies the problem.

With so many great Mega Drive and SNES shooters queuing up to be reborn, it's a real shame that, as is so often the case, little has been done to *Steel Empire* to make it worth the asking price alongside the top flight of handheld titles. Though fun for a while and in small doses, without the requisite well-planned waves of enemies and unique elements that separate a great shooter from the hopeful masses, you simply won't find yourself going back to the well often, if at all. Hold down the shoot button for an hour or so, kill a lot of enemies before you even see them, blow up a few mildly impressive bosses then switch back to an old favourite before monotony kicks in, secretly waiting for that port of *Ikaruga*. Well, we can dream, right?

R-TYPE III (GBA)



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



GRADIUS ADVANCE

VERDICT 5/10
A LAZY PORT OF AN AVERAGE GAME

While in keeping with the game's theme, giant mechanical bosses can only entertain for so long…

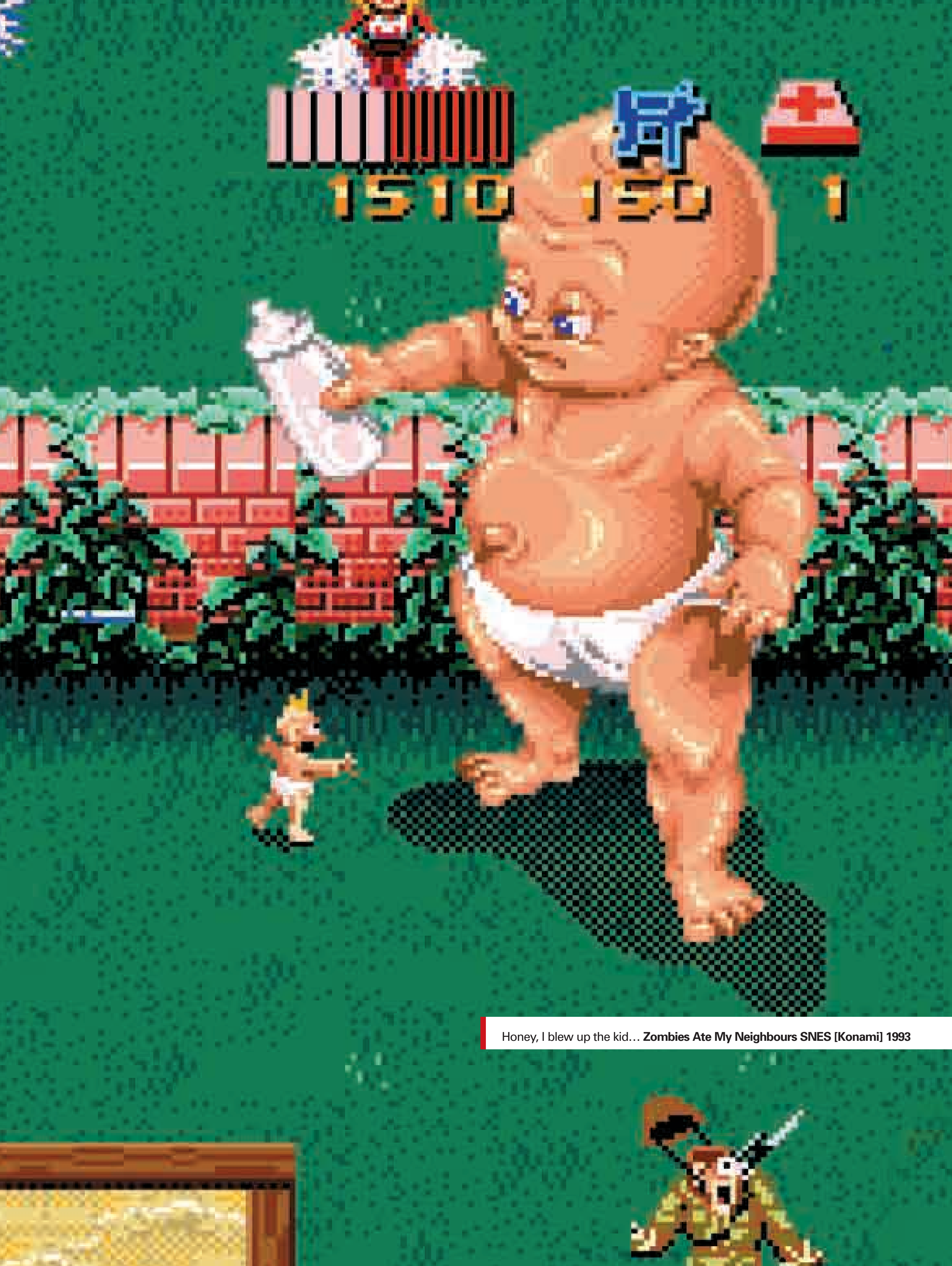


games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

LINK-UP: A GBA version of this shooter would be the perfect place to add a multiplayer mode, right? Wrong. The game is sadly as lonely an experience as ever.





Honey, I blew up the kid… **Zombies Ate My Neighbours SNES [Konami] 1993**

A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.21 AUGUST 2004
00p

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

THE MONTHLY OLD-SCHOOL SOFTWARE REVIEW



PLUS

REVIEWS OF RISE OF THE ROBOTS, GUNHED AND GUNFRIGHT, RETROSPECTIVE WITH CHUN WAH KONG, RETRO CONTACT, ROM SERVICE, AND MUCH MORE!

RETROSPEC

We talk to the coders who remake the classics of yesteryear

Rising Sun Retro

Is Radiant Silvergun the greatest shoot-'em-up ever made?

CLASSIC MACHINE ATARI LYNX

WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE WORLD'S VERY FIRST COLOUR HANDHELD

Clash Of The Titans

Which version of Gryzor was the best?

Rediscovered! BENNY HILL'S MADCAP CHASE!

OUTRUN

The Greatest Retro Game Ever?

Naked Lara: The Truth

Retro News

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming...

Ever since I can remember, I've preferred to do things my way, and this was never more apparent than with my love for the underdog console. I never purposely went out to buy the least popular system, but it always seemed to turn out that way. When the NES and Master System arrived I was lusting after the PC Engine. Why get a PlayStation when you could play all those lovely Japanese Saturn shooters; or a Game Boy when you could play on a Lynx? I'm not saying that my choices were better than the mainstream, but it did open my eyes to a few classics that I would have otherwise missed.

Nowadays, most gamers are beginning to realise that every machine had its own selection of great games. Of course, there'll always be people who claim that the majority of retro games are unplayable by today's standards, but I'd like to think they're missing the point of what our love of retro is all about. While we take a nostalgic look back at many of our favourite games, we make sure that they still hold up today.

Sure, we're often accused of remembering games through rose-tinted glasses, but this isn't the case. While many retro titles may not amuse you for as long as current games, plenty are as playable now as they ever were. There were a lot of turkeys, sure, but this is true of the current scene as well. No matter what system a game came out on, you'll always find the best of them here.

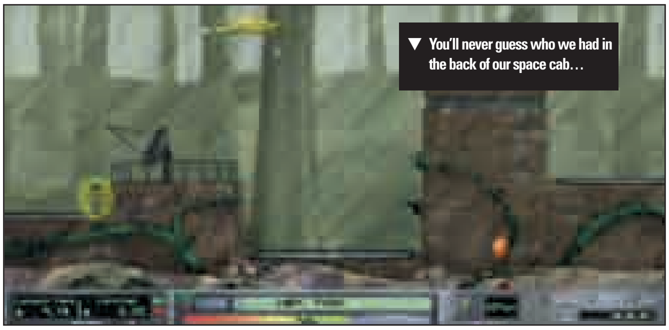
Darran Jones, Retro Editor

South of the moon at this time of night?

You may be familiar with *Crazy Taxi*, but *Space Taxi* was the original yellow-cab gaming title. And now with *Space Taxi 2*, you can relive the Commodore 64 experience on your PC. Touted as a remake of, and sequel to, the original *Space Taxi*, *Space Taxi 2* has been developed by Twilight Games. The team has been helped out by John F. Kutcher, who programmed the first game nearly 20 years ago.

Space Taxi had you picking up and delivering what looked like the supporting cast from Jabba's palace in *Star Wars*. With each level hosting a variety of challenges such as minefields, monsters and black holes, it wasn't easy – and the C64 keyboard didn't help matters either. Modern PC keys might make things a bit simpler, but we reckon you'll still lose days in the addictive gameplay.

Visit www.twilightgames.com to buy the game or download a demo.



▼ You'll never guess who we had in the back of our space cab…

New Commodore 64 release

Still got your Commodore 64 up and running? Then you'll be interested to hear that you can buy some brand new games for it. *Grid Zone* and *Cyber-Wing* are on the way, and *Reaxion* is available now for the frankly paltry sum of £1.99 from www.cronosoft.co.uk.

The story behind *Reaxion* reveals that there's a nuclear power plant under the hills of Wenley Moor, but something has gone wrong. Infected by a virus, all computer systems have shut down and the core settings have been randomised, leading all 99 cores to become unstable.

As is always the way in these situations, you have to go in and clean everything up in a puzzle-solving sort of a way – but of course it's not that simple…

Promising addictive brain-teasing and some authentic Commodore styling, *Reaxion* is ideal for any C64 owners looking for a new challenge on their favourite retro console.



TREASURE BREAKS ITS PROMISE

It's often said in the games industry how Treasure has never been keen to remake past hits – even if *Ikaruga* was very similar to *Radiant Silvergun*. Now, however, it would appear that the developer has had a change of heart, as *Advanced Guardian Heroes* is due out in Japan in September.

The original *Guardian Heroes* was a superb Saturn title with fantastic gameplay, unique visuals and some intense battles. Despite impressing many gamers, later Treasure titles for the Saturn never appeared in the UK, so fans missed out on great games like *Radiant Silvergun* and *Silhouette Mirage*.

Although little is known about the new title, we're not too sure if we're happy with the direction the visuals are taking. What we do know, though, is that three characters called En, Rai and Hyou have been announced. Hopefully, more information will be released over the next few months…

R·E·T·R·O· N·E·W·S· R·E·T·R·O· N·E·W·S·

This Month In 1989

SEGA unleashed its Mega Drive on the world while Jive bloody Bunny was Swinging The Mood. Rabbity fool.

GAMING NEWS AUGUST '89

SEGA enters the 16-bit generation

SEGA, hurting after its Master System's performance in the US didn't match the success it had enjoyed in Europe and Japan, finally decided that 16-bit technology was cheap enough to use in its next system. The Genesis, or Mega Drive as it was known in territories outside the US, could display 64 colours on the screen at any one time and hosted many hit games, including the likes of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Micro Machines* and *Streets Of Rage*. Released on August 14 in America (well, just New York and Los Angeles to begin with) at a respectable $190 (around £100) SEGA's new machine quickly picked up a large following and found particular success with its many sports and arcade titles.

A revised edition of the Mega Drive (not to be confused with the Mega Drive II) was released not long after the launch, and it lacked the ability to play old Master System games through an adaptor. Despite performing very well at retail, a constant stream of largely redundant add-ons (the Mega CD and 32X, anyone?) eventually scared developers away from the Mega Drive. This was bad news at a time when Nintendo's SNES was dominating the market, but the Mega Drive is still SEGA's biggest success story.

the CHARTS in August 1989

UK Music Charts

1 SWING THE MOOD	JIVE BUNNY AND THE MASTERMIXERS
2 WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING	KYLIE MINOGUE
3 FRENCH KISS	LIL LOUIS
4 POISON	ALICE COOPER
5 YOU'LL NEVER STOP ME FROM LOVING YOU	SONIA
6 DON'T WANNA LOSE YOU	GLORIA ESTEFAN
7 TOY SOLDIERS	MARTIKA
8 TOO MUCH	BROS
9 ON OUR OWN	BOBBY BROWN
10 YOU'RE HISTORY	SHAKESPEAR'S SISTER

Arcade games we played

1 LEGEND OF HERO TONMA	IREM
2 R-TYPE II	IREM
3 AREA 88	CAPCOM
4 ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS	ATARI
5 STUN RUNNER	ATARI
6 BLOCK OUT	TECHNOS
7 PANG	MITCHELL
8 COTTON	SUCCESS
9 GOLDEN AXE	SEGA
10 STRIDER	CAPCOM

Last Month's Mega CD Screenshots

1ST ROW
Three Ninjas Kick Back
The Adventures of Willy Beamish
Afterburner 3
Aisle Lord
Ax
Bari Arms
Batman Returns
Battlecorps
BC Racers
Black Hole Assault

2ND ROW
Bram Stoker's Dracula
Brutal: Paws Of Fury
Chuck Rock 2: Son Of Chuck
Chuck Rock
Citizen X
Cobra Command
Crime Patrol
Dark Wizard
Double Switch
Dungeon Master 2: Skull Keep

3RD ROW
Earthworm Jim Special Edition
Ecco: The Tides Of Time
The Terminator
Eternal Champions
Eye Of The Beholder
Fatal Fury Special
FIFA International Soccer
Final Fight CD
Flashback: The Quest For Identity
Ground Zero Texas

4TH ROW
Heart Of The Alien
Heimdall
Hook
Iron Helix
Jaguar XJ220
Jurassic Park
Keio's Flying Squadron
Lethal Enforcers
Lunar The Silver Star
Mad Dog McCree

5TH ROW
Mickey Mania
Microcosm
Mortal Kombat
NBA Jam
Night Trap
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure
Prince Of Persia
Racing Aces
Revenge Of The Ninja
Revengers Of Vengeance

6TH ROW
Road Avenger
Robo Aleste
Samurai Showdown
The Secret Of Monkey Island
SEGA Classics Arcade Collection
Sensible Soccer
Sewer Shark
Shadow Of The Beast 2
Shining Force CD
Silpheed

7TH ROW
Snatcher
Sol-Feace
Sonic CD
Soul Star
Space Ace
Star Wars Rebel Assault
The Lawnmower Man
The Misadventures Of Flink
The Ninja Warriors
The Smurfs

8TH ROW
ESPN National Hockey Night
Time Cop
Tomcat Alley
Ultraverse Prime
Who Shot Johnny Rock?
Wild Woody
Winds Of Thunder
Wolfchild
Wonder Dog
WWF: Rage In The Cage

Rising Sun Retro

For many, the advent of 16-bit consoles opened up a world of import gaming. One incentive was the ability to get hold of games that would never appear outside Japan. With this in mind, we'll be taking a look at the import classics that never got released in the UK.; our first title is perhaps the greatest shoot-'em-up ever made…

R•A•D•I•A•N•T S•I•L•V•E•R•G•U•N

Release: 1989
Format: Saturn
Publisher: ESP Software
Developer: Treasure

From its spectacular Mega Drive debut, *Guardian Heroes*, to the extreme, kinetic gunplay of *Alien Soldier*, you can guarantee that a Treasure game will be polished to perfection. For many, though, Treasure reached its pinnacle with its 1989 Saturn release *Radiant Silvergun*. Don't believe us? Read on.

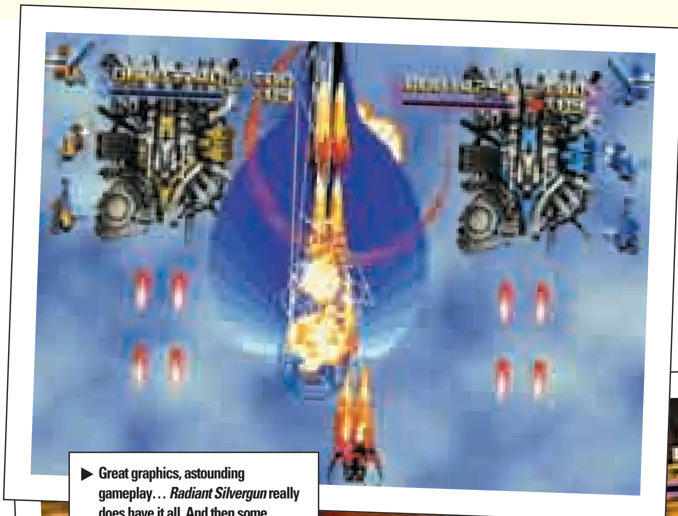
For many hardcore gamers, the Saturn was a dream come true. It flopped in the West, but those who were willing to import discovered a slew of fantastic titles, including some of the best shoot-'em-ups any home console had ever seen. *Battle Garegga*, *Soukyugurentai* and *Hyper Duel* were just a few of the 51 shmups available, but every one bowed before the mighty *Silvergun*.

No stranger to getting hardware to perform above and beyond the call of duty, Treasure took SEGA's machine and created one of the most astounding-looking titles that Saturn owners had ever seen. Putting to rest the claims that the Saturn couldn't handle 3D, *Radiant Silvergun* mixed gorgeous 2D sprites with a host of nifty hardware effects to create a truly mind-blowing experience. Fogging, transparency and scaling were just a few of the tricks that made *Silvergun* stand out, and such was Treasure's mastery of the Saturn that it ensured slowdown was kept to a minimum.

However, the true graphical mastery was saved for the game's many impressive bosses. From huge rotating monstrosities that spat great bursts of flame, to the pair of motherships that attacked you while speeding through some fiendishly twisting tunnels, every encounter was superb. Add some suitably rousing tunes and extremely meaty sound effects and *Silvergun*'s captivating style was complete.

Of course, there was more to *Silvergun* than just fancy aesthetics and Treasure had included gripping gameplay elements to ensure gamers would find plenty to return to. *Radiant Silvergun* eschewed the traditional route of handing out power-ups and simply gave you seven impressive weapons (including a fantastic Radiant Sword) from the start. Treasure took things even further by allowing each weapon to be enhanced. The more points you scored with a weapon, the higher its experience would climb; get enough points and your firepower would increase to higher levels of destruction. Add to this the fact that shooting same-coloured enemies would garner plenty of bonus points and it was plain to see that there was more to *Silvergun* than met the eye.

Having access to all this high-powered weaponry might make the game sound easy, but that wasn't the case at all. Ridiculous amounts of bullets, some incredibly tough boss patterns and some intricately designed levels meant *Silvergun* was as tricky as it was gorgeous. Gamers couldn't get enough and a much-maligned genre (at least in the West) was revived in style.



▶ Great graphics, astounding gameplay… *Radiant Silvergun* really does have it all. And then some.



NO THANKS, WE'RE WESTERN

With the advent of the third dimension, gamers became obsessed with 3D fighters and racers so it was perhaps understandable why *Radiant Silvergun* never received a Western release. Although a few shooters did manage to reach US and UK shores, their impact was so small that publishers obviously felt that there was little or no market for them. As a result, many gamers missed out on some absolute gems.

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT

Benny Hill's Madcap Chase!

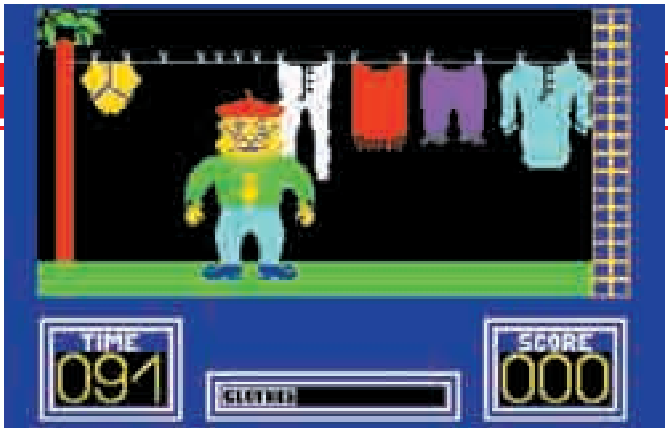
Release: 1985
Format: NES
Publisher: DK Tronics Ltd
Developer: Don Priestly

Taking time out from pinching bums and being chased by nurses at high speed, loveable rascal Benny Hill agrees to run errands for the residents of Hill Street. His tasks mostly involve gathering objects ranging from clean clothes to apples in order to appease the likes of Mrs Harras and Mr Bramley. Unfortunately for the cuddly comedian, the locals think he means to steal the objects he's been asked to collect and the Benster quickly finds himself chased by angry residents.

While extremely simple in concept – run to the end of a level, grab an item and then run back – several interesting additions meant this was still great fun to play. The most intriguing idea was the ability to move on three planes, thus allowing you to walk in front of and behind various on-screen objects.

Once Benny had made it to the end of a level (normally around three screens in length) he'd have to retrieve an item and take it back to the start, and that's where the titular Madcap Chase began. Various locals (including what looks like a man in drag and an angry policeman) weren't happy with Benny's antics and quickly give chase. If Benny managed to get back to his basket without being caught, he could net himself 20 points before heading off for the next item. But if you were too slow, or walked into one of the many on-screen objects (hence the need to travel on three levels), you'd fall flat on your back or get caught and stamped on by an angry resident.

Featuring big, colourful visuals (a trademark of well-known Spectrum programmer Don Priestly) *Benny Hill's Madcap Chase!* proved to be a pleasantly diverting title. Just don't let the missus catch you…



▶ Benny's plan to nick a pair of bloomers is scuppered by the butchest woman on Hill Street. Lawks! Lummee! etc…



VIDEOGAMES MYTHS

Naked Lara Croft In Tomb Raider

Format: Various
Year: 1996
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core Design

TOMB RAIDER Core Design's 3D platform adventure title burst onto the gaming scene in 1996, making Lara Croft an overnight star. Sadly, the shapely, well-bred Ms Croft was plagued by rumours that she appeared in the game in the nip. Were the stories true, or just the product of fevered teenage imaginations…?

When *Tomb Raider* was released in 1996, gamers everywhere were wowed by the solidly designed game world and its carefully thought-out puzzles… oh, who are we kidding? The main highlight of the game was undoubtedly the protagonist Lara Croft and her ludicrously ample (though decidedly pointy) charms. It didn't take long for rumours to start circulating about gaming's first sexy videogames star, and by far the most popular was the urban myth that it was possible to play as Lara in her birthday suit, providing, of course, that a suitably complex code was entered.

It's unclear exactly where this rumour first appeared (no doubt it was the work of an unscrupulous magazine), but the effects were amazing and hysterically funny. Countless gamers were soon announcing that they had glimpsed Lara's 'modesty' thanks to various complicated sequences of button presses and despite confirmation from Core Design that naked Lara didn't exist, the rumour persisted.

Eventually an intrepid PC hacker was able to provide a nude patch for the PC games, no doubt to the relief of thousands of pent-up pre-pubescent boys everywhere. Don't expect us to show you the pictures, though – this is a respectable magazine, you know…


▶ The physics-defying Lara Croft could be seen as something of a trailblazer – the most famous woman in gaming. Then again, seeing as she's only famous for one thing (well, two things, really) that's not really progress. You never get people asking for 'naked Mario' cheats, do you? Or 'shaved Donkey Kong' codes. Well, really…

CLASH OF THE TITANS

G•R•Y•Z•O•R



As gaming infiltrated the home market a new breed of gamer evolved. Dubbed the 'fanboy', he associated himself with a certain genre, machine or even a developer or publisher, and then ridiculed all that opposed him. First recorded in playgrounds in the early Eighties, typical arguments revolved around who had the better machine, or which game looked best on which format. We aim to put a stop of years of petty squabbling by finding the definitive versions of some classic titles. First up – Konami's 1987 scrolling shoot-'em-up, *Gryzor*.

ROUND 1: VISUALS

COMMODORE 64: 'Blocky' is the first word that springs to mind; your intrepid hero looks like he's just stepped out of a Lego factory and he's a laughable parody of the original game character. Colours are overly bright and do little to convey the grittiness of the original arcade game. Although the C64 features some lovely smooth scrolling, it simply isn't good enough.

SPECTRUM: Now this is more like it. Considering the Speccy's limitations *Gryzor* looks exceedingly close to its arcade parent. Characters throughout are instantly recognisable and there's some impressively smooth scrolling that not even the Amstrad CPC could manage. All in all, a very decent conversion that should please fans of the arcade game.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: Okay, so it may lack the scrolling of its 8-bit peers, but this is by far the best-looking version out of the three systems. Visuals are incredibly detailed and perfectly capture the essence of the arcade game. A truly Herculean effort that proves the CPC can really sing in the correct hands.

WINNER: AMSTRAD CPC 464
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 2: AUDIO

COMMODORE 64: Some may say this is an unfair category – considering the C64's excellent SID chip – and who are we to argue? Although this is far from Jason Brooke's best work, it plays throughout the game and enhances the gameplay.

SPECTRUM: So what if its sound chip is inferior to the C64's? The Spectrum puts up a surprisingly good fight and has the same tune on its title screen that features in the main game of the C64 version. In-game effects are rather sparse, but this is still a very strong effort.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: With those glorious visuals it was obvious that the Amstrad would suffer somewhere and, unfortunately, it's in the audio department. Music is limited to the 'game over' screen only and the in-game effects are lacklustre to say the least, which is a shame after such a strong showing in the 'Visuals' category. Easily the worst performer here.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 3: GAMEPLAY

COMMODORE 64: What's going on here then? Jumping gives your character almost superhuman abilities and it's all too easy to mistime a jump and land on a bullet. The biggest fault, however, is having to use the space bar to jump even when using a joystick; it's poorly implemented and makes for some frustrating gameplay.

SPECTRUM: Controls are nice and responsive – it's a lot easier to time jumps and you always feel in control. Sadly, the frustrating need to press the space bar to jump is still present and once again causes problems that could have easily been avoided. Like the C64 version, it's best to play this on the keyboard.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: The simple ideas often work out the best. Rather than use a separate button to control your jumping, you simply press up on the joystick – genius! Add to this the same tight controls as the Spectrum version and an easily manageable jump and the CPC version emerges triumphant.

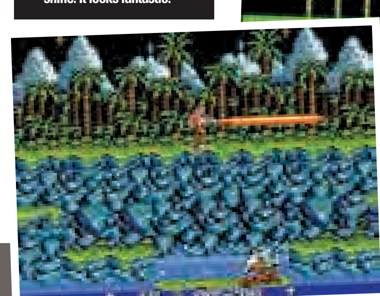
WINNER: AMSTRAD CPC 464
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

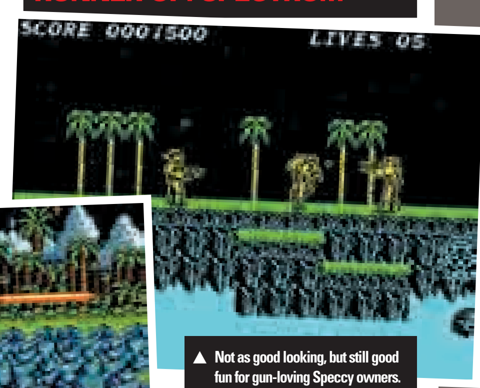
AND THE WINNER IS...

Gryzor is quite simply one of the finest arcade conversions that the Amstrad has ever seen and is a testament to the game's programmers. The Spectrum version is well worth a look, but the Amstrad wins hands down and remains very playable to this day.

Amstrad CPC 464

▼ *Gryzor* on the Amstrad is really given a chance to shine. It looks fantastic.





▲ Not as good looking, but still good fun for gun-loving Speccy owners.



GRYZOR (Various Home Systems) Ocean, 1987 – UK Advertisement

ATARI LYNX



"WHY I LOVE MY ATARI LYNX"

While all my friends were buying Game Boys, I chose the lonely route of owning a Lynx. Sure, I was mocked when my trusty machine would run out of power, but I didn't care; I had *Klax, Blue Lightning, Electrocop* and fantastic power in the palm of my hand. Eventually, other Lynx owners were found and we'd gather like criminals to play the likes of *Rampage* and *Xenophobe* via ComLynx. It was painful when the software began to dry up and the Game Boy and Game Gear dominated the market, but my memories are worth their weight in Lynxes.

Darran Jones

LIKE SO MANY HANDHELDS, THE LYNX IS NOW REMEMBERED AS ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE GAME BOY'S SUCCESS. BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT...

The story of Atari's Lynx began in 1987 with a company called Epyx. Renowned for hit games like *Mission Impossible* and the *Games* series, Epyx had been hard at work on its colour-screen Handy handheld but lacked the financial backing to get the machine produced. Nintendo was invited to buy into the project, but declined (for reasons that are obvious now). Atari, however, was impressed by the Handy's power and saw it as a way to break back into the games market.

At the 1989 Summer CES, Atari's CEO showed off the machine, now renamed the Portable Color Entertainment System. Nintendo also announced its Game Boy in 1989 and comparisons were quickly drawn between the two machines. Although Atari's machine had a large colour screen, a nifty backlight and some extremely powerful hardware, the Game Boy was a lot more portable and had a much longer battery life. Unperturbed, Atari launched its machine in America at the end of 1989. Due to limited quantities and its high price – at $199, it was almost twice the price of the Game Boy – the newly christened Lynx immediately suffered in the first handheld war.

Things picked up for Atari in 1990, though, and a host of great arcade conversions soon appeared. The likes

NOW THAT'S DIFFERENT

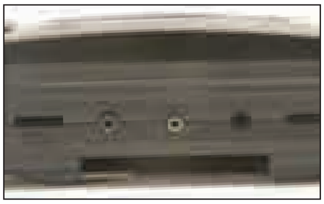
The Lynx had several innovative features that made it unique in the console market. It was possible to flip the machine and play it either left- or right-handed and you could turn it through 90 degrees in order to play vertical games. Perhaps the most impressive feature, however, was the ability to link up with up to seven other players via the ComLynx – but the chances of finding that many other Lynx owners were extremely slim. The Lynx was also intended to be compatible with Atari's Jaguar, much like the GBA is with the GameCube today. Sadly, as the Lynx's fortunes waned, so did Atari's and the feature was never implemented.



Classic Machine

SPECIFICATIONS

DIMENSIONS: 10.75" x 4.25" x 1.5" (9.25" x 4.25" x 2" for the Lynx II)
SCREEN: 3.5" diagonal
PORTS: Headphones, ComLynx, power, game-card slot, battery holder
BATTERY POWER: Six AA batteries
CUSTOM CHIP1: Mikey 16-bit custom CMOS chip running at 16 MHz
PROCESSOR: MOS 65C02 processor running at around 3.6 MHz
COLOUR PALETTE: 4,096 colours (16 simultaneous colours per scanline), 512 bytes of bootstrap and game-card loading ROM
CUSTOM CHIP2: Suzy (16-bit custom CMOS chip running at 16 MHz)
GRAPHICS ENGINE: Hardware drawing support, high-speed sprite scaling, distortion and tilting effects, clipping and multidirectional scrolling, variable frame rate (up to 75 fps)
STANDARD RESOLUTION: 160 x 102 'Triad' resolution
DRAM: 64K
CARD STORAGE: 128k, 256k or 512k of ROM



BUTTONS

The Lynx's unique button layout meant the unit could be played left- or right-handed simply by flipping the machine over.

THE EVER-EVOLVING CARTRIDGE

If there was one thing that was a real pain with the Lynx, it was the cards on which the games were stored. Initially, they were a bugger to pull loose from the machine because there wasn't anything to hold on to. Fortunately, only the five launch games suffered and the next step was for Atari to introduce the Ridge. While slightly better, it was still far from perfect and eventually Atari developed the Curved Lip, which became the standard. Later homebrew titles used different styles again (with varying degrees of success), but our money will always be on the Curved Lip.

of *Ms Pac-Man*, *Klax*, *Paperboy* and *Rampage* were just a few of the titles available and the majority of the conversions were very faithful. One of Atari's biggest problems, however, was its own name. Because of the videogame crash of the early Eighties, many shops were reluctant to take on an Atari machine; the fact that there were no triple-A titles for the machine also hurt its image. The continued success of the Game Boy, not to mention the Lynx's lack of third-party support, meant Atari was having a tough time competing with Nintendo.

In 1991, however, the Lynx began to hit its stride and the great games kept coming. *APB*, *STUN Runner*, *Ninja Gaiden* and *Robotron 2084* graced the handheld and a massively improved marketing campaign helped drive sales. It may have suffered an incredibly short battery life, cheap workmanship (instead of using grey plastic, Atari simply painted white plastic grey) and a rather bulky size, but the Lynx's improved power was winning it a lot of friends.

Then in May 1991, SEGA entered the market with its Game Gear and the Lynx took another hit. Atari fought back and relaunched the Lynx (the Lynx II) in a new, sleeker form. There were now rubber grips to make the unit more comfortable to hold, the backlight had a power-save function and the screen was much clearer; it was a massive improvement.

Sadly, Atari couldn't compete with the sheer amount of software that SEGA and Nintendo had in their back catalogues and by the end of 1992, sales of the machine began to dip again. By 1995, the Lynx was all but dead – even Atari had abandoned it in favour of the Jaguar.

Fortunately, the Lynx is far from defunct, as various companies (such as Duranik and Songbird Productions) still make games for the machine. It might not have been the success that Atari so desperately wanted, but the Lynx still managed to bless us with plenty of happy memories …

ATARI LYNX



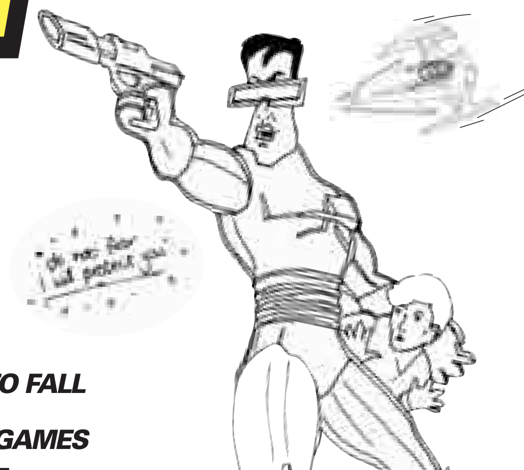
Classic Machine

POWER

B A



Six of the Best



IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST HANDHELDS TO FALL TO THE MIGHTY GAME BOY, BUT THE ATARI LYNX STILL HAD SOME AMAZING GAMES

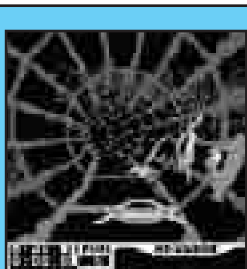
California Games

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1989

There may have been a few events missing, but this was still a great title and the perfect giveaway for early Lynx adopters. You could choose from four events – Surfing, Footbag, BMX and Half-Pipe – and all were great fun. There were plenty of graphical tricks to show off the Lynx's power and it was even possible to link up with other players. Music was generally very good and each event played like a dream.



STUN Runner



Publisher: Atari
Year: 1991

When Atari announced that *STUN Runner* would appear on the Lynx, cynics thought the notion ridiculous. As it turned out, Atari had the last laugh and delivered a hectic racer that was an incredibly accurate conversion (considering the Lynx's limitations). Like *Klax, STUN Runner* had masses of digitised speech; combined with the blisteringly fast graphics and sublime gameplay, it made for another classy Lynx title. Forget the hideous Atari ST port – this was the definitive home version.

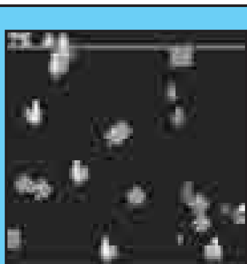
Blue Lightning

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1989

An early launch title, *Blue Lightning* really showed off the Lynx's sprite-scaling capabilities and was a superb blaster that was a world away from the many Game Boy titles that were available at the time. While fairly limited, the *Top Gun*-esque gameplay was engrossing and there were plenty of missions to keep you busy. Many Lynx owners bought this stunning-looking title when it came out, so it's now very easy to find.

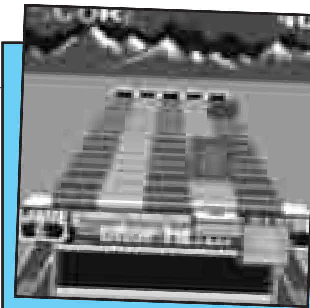


Robotron 2084



Publisher: Williams
Year: 1991

Okay, so the dual joysticks of the original arcade game were a no go, but *Robotron 2084* is still an excellent title. Using the Lynx's main face buttons, it was possible to rotate your fire in either direction to shoot the game's many enemies. Granted, it wasn't as slick or responsive as the arcade original, but you were too busy dodging and blasting to care. Frustratingly tricky to get hold of now, this is still worth tracking down.



Klax

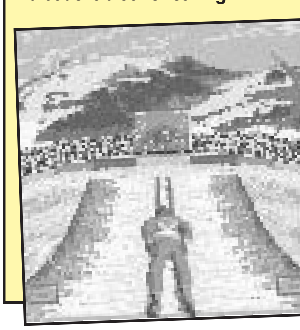
Publisher: Atari
Year: 1990

Every handheld needs a good puzzle game and the Lynx was adequately catered for with the excellent *Klax*. Taking an extremely simple concept – grab falling coloured tiles then dump them into groups of three or more – *Klax* was fiendishly addictive. What made it stand out, though, were the fantastic graphics and great stereo sound. Every digitised sound from the arcade game had been accurately ported to the Lynx, which added bags of atmosphere to an already wonderful game.

Alpine Games

Publisher: Duranik
Year: 2004

If you thought *STUN Runner* and *Blue Lightning* showed the Lynx off to the best of its abilities, you might want to check out *Alpine Games*. With some wonderfully smooth scaling and fantastic animation, this is one of the finest-looking Lynx titles available. The gameplay is just as good and with nine events, you'll be hammering away at this for some time. The ability to save high scores without the need for a code is also refreshing.





OUTRUN (Various Home Systems) US Gold, 1988 – UK Advertisement



Back in the Eighties

A look back at the decade that taste forgot

The Eighties. If you're of a certain age, that decade will mean an awful lot to you. Just the mention of it will make you go all misty eyed as you remember the good old days when Duran Duran were hot, mullets were in and those heroes in a half-shell were bigging up your Saturday morning… Hang on, isn't that now? Duran Duran were at the Brits, some idiot has decided that mullets are cool, and the Turtles are back on the telly. It's like the Nineties never happened.

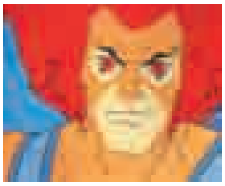
In case you hadn't noticed, the world is going Eighties mad, which is mainly down to the fact people can't think up new ideas any more, so they resort to rehashing all the old classics. In some cases this is disastrous (mullets being a prime example), but when it comes to videogames this isn't necessarily a bad thing – especially when Nintendo releases special editions of its superb Nintendo Entertainment System games. While it's at it, the big N has also released a limited edition NES-décor Game Boy Advance SP which you'll find in shops now, along with eight top NES titles.

In celebration of Nintendo's latest rose-tinted venture, it's time to look back at what made the Eighties so good (without using the term 'skill' once – honest).

Toon Time

Your life in pictures…

It's fair to admit that nostalgia is a dish best served drunk: "Yeah, it washgreat wannit, the Eighties… evewyfing washgreat, yeah." In reality, of course, when you think about it most of the Eighties was rubbish. There were the occasional highlights, though, and for many the two things that really stand out are the toys and the cartoons. Put simply, they don't make 'em like they used to. Cliché perhaps, but it's true. It's possible to go on all day about our favourite gadgets and shows, but we don't have the room, so we'll just give you what are, in many people's opinion, the top five Eighties cartoons. Please don't send in your top fives, though – this top five is skill, and we'll hear no more about it.



1)Thundercats

Thunder, thunder, thunder, Thundercats… HOOOOOOOOO! Thundercats are on the move, Thundercats are loose. Yup, they really were, you know. You see, it doesn't matter how camp cartoon superheroes look because you're a kid and none of that nonsense matters. Wear leotards and paint your face? Sounds great. Fight a battle that you can never really win against the evil undead Mumm-ra? Sure, we'd love to.

FLASHBACK

A QUALITY SLICE OF RETRO GAMING

The best thing about the Eighties? The advent of home videogaming, thanks largely to the Nintendo Entertainment System. And to celebrate this halcyon age, Nintendo has released a limited edition Game Boy Advance SP that's been maxed up to look like a NES, along with eight classic games from the decade that nostalgia freaks won't let you forget. Here's a little reminder of the NES goodness that's in a games store near you now.



Super Mario Bros.

GRABBED BY THE PLUMBS

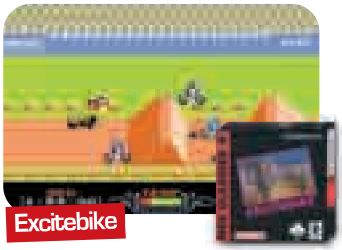
Put simply, Mario was the gaming icon of the Eighties, and there's good reason for that. Dazzling good looks and no-holds-barred heroism aside, he just happened to star in the most perfect platform adventure of his time – if not all time. Jumping on platforms and enemies' heads has never been quite so revolutionary… and that's because it hadn't been done before, you see.



Donkey Kong

SAVE THE PRINCESS

The record states that Donkey Kong was named after a translation error, but who cares? We can't think of anything better to call a great big ape with women on his mind. Control a plumber, make him climb ladders (careful, mate, some crazy furball is throwing barrels at you) and save the princess. Ah, this could be the start of a beautiful relationship.



Excitebike

TWO WHEELS GOOD

Your mum would never let you go down the rec on the local gang's scrambler and jump 30 feet into the air, would she? It's possible that this great British fascist regime was what drove games like this one straight to the top. The most fun you can have with a scrambler without your mum moaning about the price of trousers and your dad threatening to put you into care.



Ice Climber

UP TO THE HIGHEST HEIGHTS

Out of all the games on these two pages this is likely to be the one that makes you go 'Erm, Ice Climbers? Who are they?'. There's no doubt that this is another classic Nintendo platformer, and if you didn't see it the first time round this is an ideal opportunity to get your hands on one of the most underrated games of its time. Then you'll never have to ask about Ice Climbers again.

day...



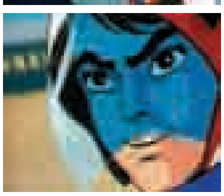
2) Danger Mouse



It doesn't matter where you work, or where you live, we all know someone who's the spitting image of Penfold, and that, friends, is why *Danger Mouse* was so successful. Maybe. The best cartoons were always the strangest, and they don't get much stranger than a mouse with a white jumpsuit and an eye-patch who protects queen and country from an evil toad.

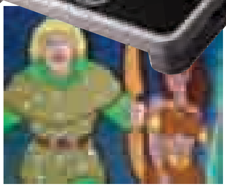
3) Battle Of The Planets





For the definition of 'pure genius' look no further than this very cartoon. Ask anyone and they'll remember it, but ask them what it was all about and you'll be there for a while. Can anyone really remember what this was about? Who cares? They had amazing capes and those visors were years ahead of their time. They fought against evil in wicked little star-fighters, right? They were always five acting as one. And there was a robot thing called 7-Zark-7. That'll do nicely.

4) Dungeons & Dragons





Will they ever make it home? Just think of the amount of episodes where they nearly, but didn't quite, get back to real life. We never stopped to think that we were only halfway through the series and there's no way they'd make it back until the end of the series at best. Ah, the innocence of youth. Ooh, Dungeon Master! No, wait, he's gone again…

5) The Moomins



We're well aware that it's the least action-packed of all the cartoons in existence, but for sheer freaky-deaky factor this has to be included. What was going on in this cartoon? Seriously, if you ever met any of these characters in the street you'd crap yourself. Mutant turtles? Fine. Vengeful demons? Fine. Moomins? You've got to be kidding. Still, we all watched every episode. With its vaguely melancholic Scandinavian atmosphere and terrifying Hattifatteners it was certainly character-building.

Back to life, back to reality

Three things from the Eighties that we want back right now

1) Luminous clothing (and shoelaces)



How sweet were these? If your budget wouldn't stretch as far as pairs of yellow, green, pink or orange luminous towelling socks then you had to make do with inch-wide day-glo laces in your high-top trainers. And then there were the t-shirts, wristbands, leg-warmers… Practical for road-safety buffs, essential for fashionistas.

LIKELIHOOD OF MAKING A COMEBACK: 3/10

2) David Hasselhoff



He's the man with the plan. He's lean, mean and definitely keen. He's the white-man afro master. He is David Hasselhoff. He needs to make a comeback and you know it. Note to all TV execs: having problems with your ratings? Stick Hasselhoff and KITT in your program and watch the ratings soar. There's definitely room for him and his hair. And what's this about a Hasselhoff rap album in the offing?

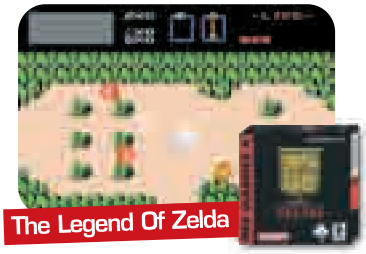
LIKELIHOOD OF MAKING A COMEBACK: 7/10

3) Rentaghost



Okay, we'll admit to not ever understanding what was going on in *Rentaghost* but there was something about watching grow-ups running around acting like complete idiots that has us all glued to the telly. If it came back now it would probably get slammed for glamorising the idea of keeping horses in the home or something similarly ridiculous.

LIKELIHOOD OF MAKING A COMEBACK: 5/10



The Legend Of Zelda

SAVE THE PRINCESS… AGAIN

Sure, we'll admit that Nintendo's storylines tend to follow a certain theme, but who cares when the games are this good? Undeniably the greatest adventure game of its time, *Zelda* set the standard then, and the franchise still sets the standard today. Get gaming and remember what made games so good. You won't be able to tear yourself away.



Bomberman

JUST DON'T BLOCK YOURSELF IN

This is another one of those things that your mum would never let you do. George: "But mum, Tom's mum used to let him blow things up in the garden! I want her to be my mum." Mum: "Yes, and now little Tommy has no hands." *Bomberman*: the explosive joy of bombs in a contained environment without the agonising loss of essential motor function.



Pac-Man

GET THE MUNCHIES ON

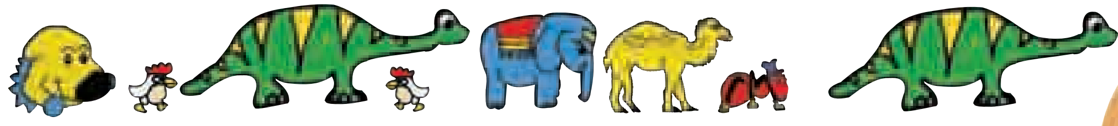
Put one very hungry man and one 'pac' into a machine, and a yellow blob with the hunger of 20 men is what you get. This unrivalled classic arcade title has appeared in so many different incarnations it's unreal, and Pac-man himself has become a gaming legend. Left, right, up, down, EAT. Could this be the most addictive game in existence? Ooh, controversial.



Xevious

IT'S MISCHIEVOUS AND DEVIOUS

Back in the Eighties, being an astronaut was at the top of many people's 'what I want to do when I grow up' list. Now, of course, space exploration is passé and people are more interested in whether they can get on *Fame Academy*, but that's all the more reason to get shooting in *Xevious*. Nintendo's very own guide to alien blasting will prepare you for any unfortunate eventualities.



Retro Feature

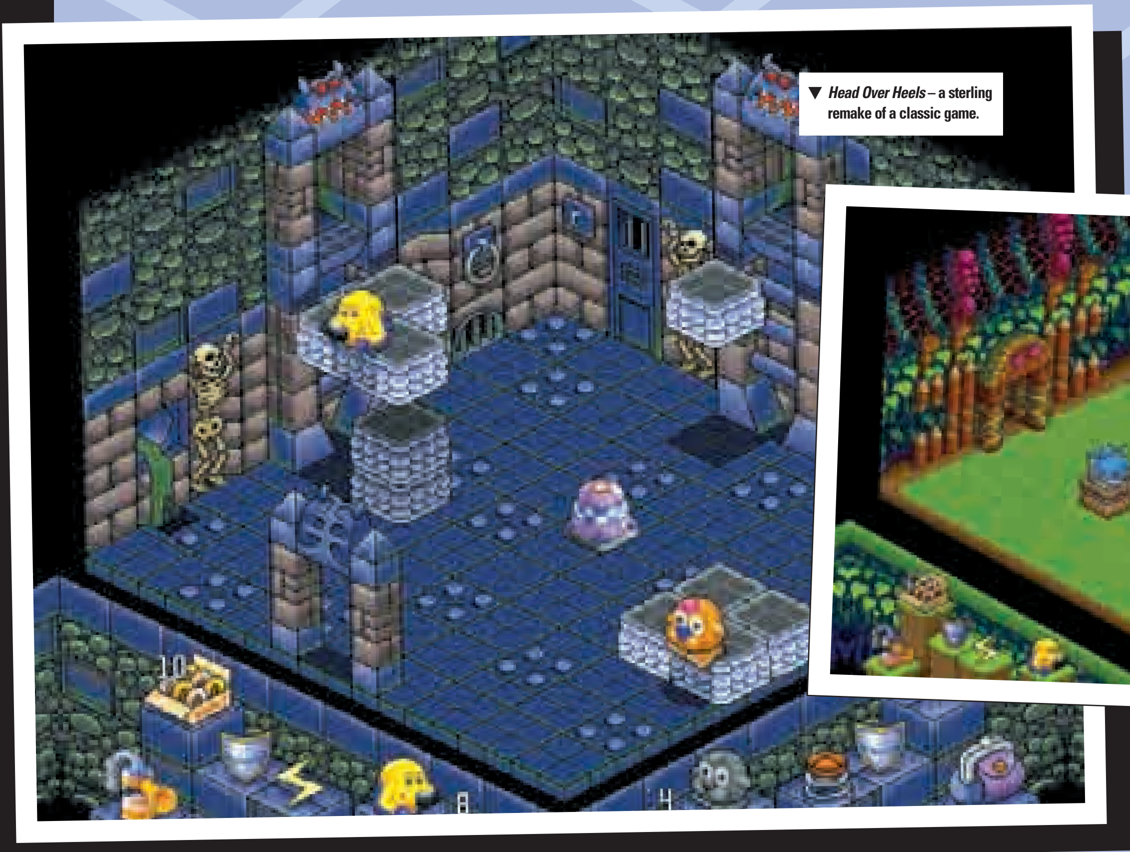
Head over heels in love with RETRO

WE MEET THE RETRO SPECIALISTS BRINGING UPDATED CLASSICS TO THE MASSES

The term 'bedroom coder' has been around since the arrival of home computers and was typically applied to trailblazers like Matthew Smith and Jordan Mechner who created gaming masterpieces before hitting the big time. These days, of course, commercial games have large development teams, huge pools of resources and (usually) lots of cash with which to make the next big hit. Spare a thought, then, for the talented individuals of Retrospec – a group of enthusiastic coders, graphic artists and musicians who are not only using the same techniques as gaming legends before them, but are actually remaking their heroes' classic titles for a new generation to enjoy.

Of course, there are plenty of similar groups on the internet, but a host of fantastic conversions and a lively website has ensured that Retrospec is the name that everyone remembers. And even though membership is only open to those who can prove themselves worthy of programming classic updates, the games have found thousands of fans. Now five years old and featuring an impressive library of over 20 games (including *Chuckie Egg*, *Pssst!*, *Manic Miner* and *Head Over Heels*), Retrospec continues to go from strength to strength; a fact not lost on co-founder Jeff Braine, who remembers the group's early days. "When we first started out, there were only six of us," he recalls. "John Dow, Rich Jordan, Graham Goring, Andy Noble, a guy called Chris who had a website on game disassemblies and myself. At first, things were fairly slow and I hosted the website on my free 10Mb webspace. As more people joined and left, it got harder for me to keep up, and my webspace started filling up as people released more games. By mid 1999 there were at least ten of us, including a werewolf that coded in Pascal."

Retrospec's reputation for delivering superb remakes spread and as more high-profile games got remade, Retrospec's star kept rising. "When Rich Jordan's *Klass Of '99* [a remake of *Skool Daze*] arrived, we ended up being linked to by a number of higher-profile websites, listed in magazines and even getting interviewed," Braine says. "This also brought in applications for membership in droves. We suddenly became a 'virtual label' – I saw sites comparing other remakes to ours, and phrases like 'as we've come to expect from Retrospec' began to appear in various reviews."



▼ *Head Over Heels* – a sterling remake of a classic game.



If there was anyone out there who still doubted Retrospec's talent, they will have been won over by last year's remake of *Head Over Heels*. Coded by Tomaz Kac, with graphics by Graham Goring, *Head Over Heels* has found a legion of ecstatic fans, including its original creator, Jon Ritman. "It's a well-crafted remake and I'm extremely flattered that after all this time, people are willing to devote so much of their free time to one of my games," says Ritman. Indeed, his only concern was a slight change to some of the original room designs. "The programmer took an easy route for dealing with the walls and doors and, unfortunately, this has had a large effect in some rooms where the room design relied on the correct placing of the walls," Ritman says. Nevertheless, he's still pleased with the final result and is more than happy to see more of his titles remade – "especially if they're released commercially," he laughs. "Gimme those royalties."

That's Teamwork

Of course, when you're remaking retro classics, one of the first things you have to do is get permission to release them. While Braine admits that a few copyright holders have refused to deal with them, there aren't any problems with most titles. "I think most copyright holders are either flattered or mildly amused at our many remakes," says Braine. "We make no money from what we do – you'll notice there aren't even any adverts or pop-ups on our website. We're not in this for the money, we don't ask for donations and we're not on the take in any way, so we don't really tend to bother people too much."

While potential copyright difficulties are just one barrier that Retrospec has to negotiate, there are other logistical problems. When you have members living as far apart as England, Australia and Yugoslavia, it's a wonder that any titles get released in the first place. But as John Blythe, one of Retrospec's resident graphics artists, explains, it's not as complicated as you may think. "Normally, one of the guys announces a new game and I'll contact them and say 'Hey, I'd love to do the graphics for this' or

THE LIKELY LADS

We tracked down Graham Goring and Tomaz Kac to talk about working under pressure, development times and 'bloody pigging Ghostbusters'…

GTM: When did you join Retrospec?

GG: Ooh, right at the start back in 1998 or 1999 when we formed from a discussion in the Usenet newsgroup comp.sys.Sinclair – which is basically a load of Speccy fans grumbling about how games used to be better, how Top Deck is the best shandy and how it used to be all fields around here.

GTM: What do you do at Retrospec?

GG: I have a highly specialised role whereby I promise to do graphics for everyone, then spend the rest of my time regretting opening my big fat yap and then gradually drawing stuff.

GTM: What's your day job then?

GG: I'm a game designer at Warthog, and before that Zed Two.

TK: I code 'serious' programs for a local firm, anything from low-level drivers to management and security software.

GTM: What's been your favourite Retrospec game?

GG: Well, *Head Over Heels*, really. I learned a heck of a lot while doing the graphics for that (which can be seen in how the graphics vary in quality depending on which planet you're on), so I have very fond memories of it.

GTM: Was there any pressure recreating *Head Over Heels*, one of the greatest games ever?

TK: Because everyone has these really fond memories of *Head Over Heels* in the past, I really didn't want to let people down. That's why we took extra time to make it as close to the original as possible with added playability and graphics. Hopefully we succeeded.

GG: Oddly, no – because Tomaz kept pretty tight-lipped about the game until a fair way into its development and so I was a fair way into the graphics before anyone outside of Retrospec saw them. Plus it's a game I love, so I wasn't going to settle for anything I wasn't fairly proud of. I knew whatever the graphics looked like in the final game, they'd be the best I could manage.

GTM: Jon Ritman is very pleased with the remake of *Head Over Heels* – how do you feel about that?

GG: I think it's great! I know he thinks we altered a few things, which screwed with the difficulty curve a little (and he's quite right), but it's so nice when you can remake a game and it doesn't reduce the original author to a seething ball of apoplectic murderous rage.



GTM: How long does it usually take to finish a game?

GG: It depends if you're going to expand upon the amount of graphics in the original game or just redo what's there, as coming up with original graphics takes me a long time as I have no visual imagination and have to rely on reference.

TK: It depends on the complexity of the original game and on the detail you want to put into the remake. Some remakes can be done in a matter of weeks, if the coding is not too complex and the game is not graphically intensive. *Head Over Heels* took a long time because we wanted it to be as perfect as possible.

GTM: What's been the most requested title?

GG: Bloody pigging *Ghostbusters*. We make it quite clear that we don't do anything licensed and yet for some reason, fans of this game keep requesting it.

TK: I would say most people want remakes of Ultimate: Play The Game games. We are doing some at the moment and more will probably follow.

GTM: What are you working on at the moment?

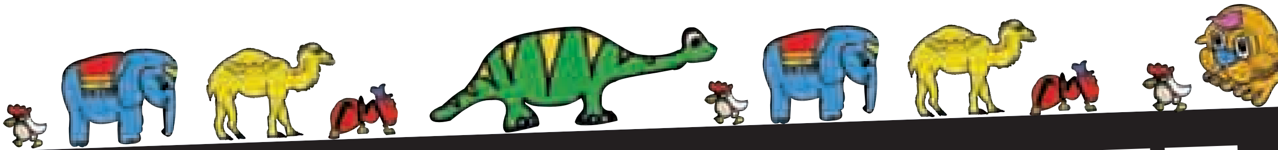
GG: Well, I'm currently working on a remake of *Ranarama* which I'll be coding and co-operating on the graphics with a chap called Zoggles, and in the meantime I'll gradually be doing the graphics for *I Ball 2* and *Sabre Wulf*. And probably some others I've no doubt forgotten about.

TK: I'm currently working on some (less complex) remakes, but with the recent lack of time because of work I am not sure when everything will be finished. I hope it will be worth the wait.

GTM: How does your partner feel about your hobby?

TK: My girlfriend loves it. She is my main tester and probably finds more bugs than anyone else. I can't imagine doing this in my free time if it wasn't for her.

GG: Not really applicable, although my imaginary one is very supportive and has really big tits.



SIX OF THE BEST

Here are just a few of the many great titles that Retrospec has remade for a new generation of gamers







SKOOL DAZE KLASS OF '99

Retrospec's first big game, *Klass Of '99* is a superb update of a classic Spectrum title. While it features a new school and a slightly different plot (not to mention several new characters), fans of the original *Skool Daze* will find themselves in very familiar territory.

HEAD OVER HEELS

Despite a few cosmetic changes that unfortunately affect certain puzzles, *Head Over Heels* is a cracking remake and further proof of Retrospec's desire to release high-quality software. Make sure you download it as soon as possible so you can rediscover this classic gem.

BLAZING TRAILS

Allan Bentham's *Blazing Trails* is a reworking of Gremlin Graphics' classic *Trail Blazer*. Slickly presented, enjoyable to play and with graphics by John Blythe, *Blazing Trails* is a perfect example of Retrospec's endeavour to recreate the gaming experiences of old.

DEFLECTOR

Another classic from Gremlin Graphics, *Deflector* sees you rotating various mirrors in order to guide your laser beam to its receiver. Created by Ignacio Perez Gil, its simple-looking visuals hide a devilishly addictive game – you didn't have plans for a social life, did you?

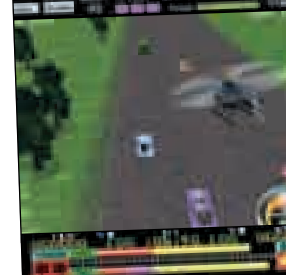
HIGHWAY PURSUIT

More an amalgamation of classic games than an actual remake, *Highway Pursuit* is nevertheless a cracking title and pays homage to many old games. Featuring incredibly frantic gameplay and some delicious visuals, *Highway Pursuit* is well worth a download.

LUNAR JETMAN

Many Ultimate titles are in development at Retrospec, and if Andy Noble's reinterpretation of *Lunar Jetman* is anything to go by, the results will be worth it. With superb cartoony visuals and the original's frenetic gameplay, *Lunar Jetman* perfectly captures another classic.







they contact me saying 'If you're not too busy, do you fancy doing the graphics for my game?' – that's about as complex as it gets."

It may be relatively easy to get the idea for a remake up and running, but commitments to work, family and other pursuits mean that fans shouldn't expect a new game to be turned around in a few short months. "Take *Head Over Heels*, for example," says Blythe. "While some titles can be finished relatively quickly, others can have quite lengthy productions. *Head Over Heels* took poor Graham ages because of the sheer size and number of graphics involved. Plus you have to factor in that in most cases we're upping the resolution of the original's graphics, which always means extra work. Finally, there's the fact that most of us have normal jobs, which can eat into our personal time too. It can take as long as a normal development cycle of a commercial game sometimes to finish the graphics."

With so much to do and so little time in which to achieve it, it's little wonder that some fans get rather impatient when an announced remake starts to drag its heels or disappears entirely, but Retrospec is just one part of each individual's very busy life, as Jeff Braine explains. "We've had accusations that we announce a lot of games and then don't deliver them, but we all do this for free, and for fun," he says. "Sometimes life gets in the way, be it divorces, hard-drive crashes or simply copyright owners asking us to stop work. These things happen, and whilst it's extremely frustrating, it's normally completely out of our hands."

Braine should know – he's been tinkering away with a remake of *Sabre Wulf* for what seems like an eternity, but the Unix system engineer often finds himself with very little spare time to code this highly anticipated title. Of course, personal pride plays a large part as well and many Retrospec members



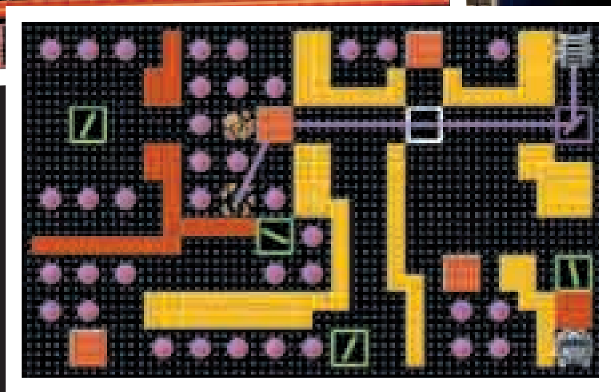
▲ *Hall Of Things* is as dangerously addictive as it ever was.



▲ It's been a long time coming, but *Sabre Wulf* is on its way. Honest.



▲ *Styx* is one of John Blythe's many Retrospec projects.





▲ Although it isn't finished yet, this remake of *Exolon* is looking mighty swish. Let's hope it's as good as Retrospec's *Cybernoid II*. Now *that's* a decent remake.

want to make sure that a title is as good as it can be before it's released. "A large part of a successful remake is to make it 'feel' the same as the original," explains Braine. "For instance, in *Sabre Wulf* if you're running along and then take your finger off the direction key, Sabre Man doesn't just stop – he has momentum. It took me a while to get something that felt right in the PC version… and even now I feel it could do with a bit of tweaking."

Best Job Ever

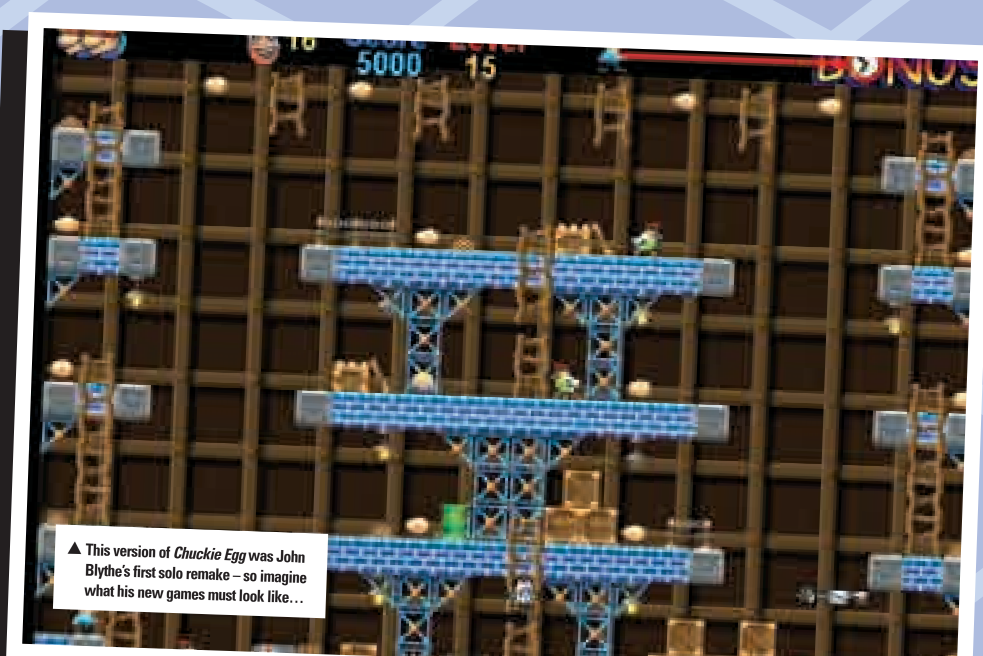
Despite various hiccups, Braine wouldn't change his hobby for the world and puts his passion for Retrospec down to the 8-bit trailblazers before him. "It probably differs from person to person, but for me, I wanted to pay tribute to the people whose work kept me entertained throughout my youth, as well as give something back to the now thriving retro community."

Although Retrospec's games are mostly created by the same group of talented individuals, Braine is happy for other fans to swell their ranks – just so long as you meet the group's requirements. "You'd need a fairly well-rounded knowledge of the language you chose to write in – one of the reasons *Sabre Wulf* is taking me a while to code is because I'm still learning some of the nuances of C," explains Braine. "After that, it's more a requirement that you have a decent understanding of the maths you're going to need to use, sometimes even physics if you're dealing with acceleration, momentum, gravity or whatever."

If that hasn't melted your brain, you'll still need to get past Retrospec's stringent quality control – something for which it's been criticised in the past. "We've been accused of being 'elitist' because of our vetting, but that's a very big misconception," explains Braine. "Although we're proud of the exposure we've had, the good reviews and the requests for interviews, it's not gone to our heads, but like any good reputation gained, you have to try and maintain it. If we turn someone down, it's usually because their style doesn't fit ours, they have no real past work to demonstrate to us, or just because they'd rather make a game which is exactly like the original down to using the same graphics and sound effects, making no updates whatsoever."

Retrospec's insistence on maintaining high standards is just another reason why we're glad to see updates of some of our favourite games being moulded in their hands – particularly when we can enjoy the likes of *Head Over Heels* again. Roll on *Sabre Wulf*…

You can visit Retrospec and download these remakes at: http://retrospec.sgn.net



▲ This version of *Chuckie Egg* was John Blythe's first solo remake – so imagine what his new games must look like…

Out Run

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

When Yu Suzuki's revolutionary Out Run appeared in 1986, it heralded a new age for arcade racers. From the moment you dropped in your first coin and heard the sound of your credit being registered, you knew you were in for something special…

Format: **Arcade**
Release Date: **1986**
Publisher: **SEGA**
Developer: **In-House**



▼ Yu Suzuki's classic racer has been enjoyed for 18 years and has had many conversions (not all good, mind).

Press the start button and you'd be presented with a radio and a choice of three different soundtracks to listen to as you raced. Fantastic music filled your ears; your gleaming Ferrari Testarossa pulled up to the starting line and began roaring in anticipation, and your heart began to pound with excitement. Before you could even get a good look at the cute blonde sitting next to your driver, the countdown had finished and you were off on the ride of your life…

Compared to other racers of the time, the pace of *Out Run* was incredible. Helped along by SEGA's superb sprite-scaling techniques (which were first seen a year earlier in *Space Harrier*), the sense of speed was fantastic and at times it often felt overwhelming. Your Testarossa handled superbly and if you were lucky enough to be playing in the



▲ *OutRun*'s starting line, with its packed crowd and super-bright colours, is one of the most iconic in videogames.



▲ Like *Space Harrier* before it, *OutRun*'s levels were sickeningly fast. A cool head was a necessity.

deluxe hydraulic cabinet, you felt every sharp turn and gut-wrenching undulation of each stretch of road.

As great *Out Run*'s driving experience was, though, it was just as exciting to explore the game's many levels and simply take in the gloriously vibrant visuals. Using a unique branching system, each stretch of tarmac that you drove down eventually split off into two paths. This continued for four stages until you finally arrived at one of five different destinations, meaning that the game contained an impressive total of 15 different locations to drive through.

Featuring exotic-sounding names like Lakeside, Death Valley and Desolation Hill, there was as much variety in *Out Run*'s locations as there were stages. Starting off in the gloriously sunny Coconut Beach, you were soon speeding past a sumptuous-looking beach (complete with a bevy of windsurfers) and hammering past road signs, palm trees and gaudy holiday shacks.





▲ *OutRun* was full of mind-twisting turns; take a corner at the wrong speed and you'd witness a spectacular crash.

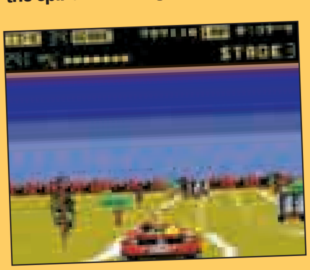
Devil's Canyon featured massive granite rocks that towered on either side of the road, while Cloudy Mountain saw you tearing down a dappled road that was blanketed by a thick layer of cloud. Each stage was fantastically detailed, had a huge amount of on-screen sprites, and moved quite unlike any other game before it. Add in the vibrant visuals, superb sound and scorching gameplay and it's incredible to think that *Out Run* was completed in just nine months. Just like *Space Harrier* before it, *Out Run* was able to throw a massive amount of sprites around on screen at any one time (128 if needed) and it wasn't unusual to find yourself jostling three or four other cars while avoiding the many objects that littered the sides of the roads on later stages. Inevitably, you would crash at some point and once the impact occurred, your Testarossa would go flying through the air, spilling its occupants like popcorn. Of course, a crash as dramatic as this would cause you to lose precious seconds. Should you clip another car, you'd find yourself spinning to a stop and receiving an angry telling off (complete with frantic finger wagging) from your passenger.

For many, it is *Out Run*'s superlative soundtrack that is so fondly remembered (we still hum it to this day). The three main tunes – *Splash Wave*, *Passing Breeze* and *Magical Sound Shower* – were incredibly upbeat and seemed to go on for ages before they looped back to the beginning. Unlike other titles of the time, *Out Run*'s music perfectly captured the hedonism of the Eighties and delivered toe-tapping beats – with a funky calypso background – that endure to this day. *Magical Sound Shower* is undoubtedly the most popular track on *Out Run*'s radio, but special mention has to go to the delightfully dreamy *Last Wave* that played during the 'Game Over' screen.

Perhaps the biggest testament to *Out Run*'s success, though, is the amount of time it has taken Suzuki-san to return to his classic and create a true sequel. Although numerous follow-ups appeared, including *Turbo Out Run*, *Out Run Europa* and *Out Runners*, none really came close to the majesty of the original game and, like the many home versions, proved a bitter disappointment to most fans. While a new generation of gamers are now able to enjoy an updated realisation of Suzuki-san's wondrous game, to us the original *Out Run* will always be king of the road.

THAT'S A CONVERSION?

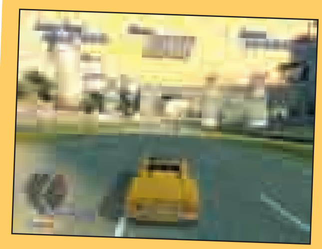
When US Gold announced that *Out Run* would be appearing on home computers, the gaming world was ecstatic. Incredibly hyped and rushed out for a Christmas release, it was perhaps unsurprising that *Out Run* disappointed so many people when it eventually appeared. All the 8-bit conversions were incredibly poor (the C64 version was the best of the bunch) and their 16-bit cousins fared little better (the Amiga version even had a bizarre bug that switched the driver's position when you turned corners). Most console iterations also suffered in the transition from the arcade and it's only really the PC Engine, Saturn and Dreamcast versions that successfully capture the spirit of the original game.



KEEP ON (OUT) RUNNING

With *Out Run* becoming such a success, it was inevitable that SEGA would revisit the franchise; what is surprising, however, is the amount of time it has taken Yu Suzuki to go back to his classic game. *Out Run 2* has only just recently appeared in arcades, but has once again captured all the magic that made the original title so great.

While it features the same branching structure as *Out Run*, SEGA AM2 has added further features to ensure that today's gamers will have plenty to keep them occupied. The recently confirmed Xbox version takes things even further by offering extensive missions and online play. Anticipation is sky high…



Presentation: Gorgeous front end that fills you with excitement	**91%**
Graphics Sickeningly fast and beautiful to boot	**96%**
Sound Three glorious tunes that perfectly capture that summer vibe	**97%**
Gameplay Sublime handling and plenty of innovation	**95%**
Longevity Many routes mean it will be ages before you see every ending	**90%**
OVERALL	**96%**

EACH MONTH, GAMES™ TAKES A LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE EMULATION SCENE. IN THIS ISSUE, WE DISCOVER A FEW THINGS THAT SONY NEVER MEANT THE PLAYSTATION 2 TO DO…



▲ If you thought Sonic on a Nintendo console was weird, check this out…

ROM SERVICE

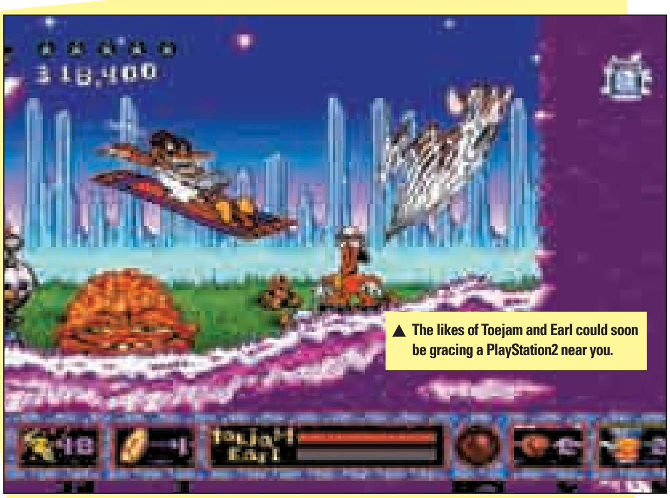
Never let it be said that the gaming industry is a dull place to work. Imagine our confusion when we were rudely interrupted mid-preview by the chimes of an impending email that, upon closer inspection, documented a new device that would allow the PlayStation2 to do things Sony never dreamt of allowing gamers to do. New functionality in the Action Replay Max allows not only the booting of CD-Rs on a standard retail console but also the operation and playback of DivX movie files, MP3s and, most topically, SEGA Mega Drive ROMs thanks to a preloaded emulator. How the hell has it got away with this? Simple – it hasn't done a thing wrong…

You see, all Datel is doing is providing a Mega Drive emulator – a program that allows the use of both homemade ROM files and the slightly less legal commercial dumps. "People are really interested in the roots of gaming," says Datel's technical director Alex Edge, although, understandably, he's not keen to push the fact that you could in theory have a quick game of *Sonic 2* on your PS2. "Public-domain Genesis and Mega Drive ROMs can be found easily on the internet and it's perfectly legal to download and play them."

It doesn't sound like this will be the last time retro gaming circles will be thrown into confusion either – when asked about the possibility of other consoles being emulated, Edge was fairly sheepish. "We have the capability to do this, so it could happen – that's all I can say right now," he said. But be it a Datel disc or a copycat, we're sure this won't be a one-off product.

However, the real problem here lies not with what Datel itself is doing with this emulation, but its possible side effects; what's to say that hackers won't be able to extract the technology that allows the booting of copied CDs in order to create the same kind of boot disk for the PS2 that made Dreamcast piracy rife?

While we're sure Datel has taken every step possible to prevent such an occurrence, Sony and Microsoft would have done much the same to prevent piracy on their consoles, and if history has taught us anything it's that the golden rule of piracy is 'Where there's a will, there's a way'. Still, in the meantime why not take this chance to journey back to the good old days when SEGA wouldn't be caught dead developing for anything except its own consoles…



▲ The likes of Toejam and Earl could soon be gracing a PlayStation2 near you.

CHEAPER THAN CHIPS

While most sites offering Mega Drive downloads have closed in the past few years, many that offer legal games and homebrew titles are still going strong. We've dug out a few of the better ones to keep you entertained while you wait for *Metal Gear Solid 3* or *Gran Turismo 4*…

SEGGALA

A decent attempt at a *Galaga* clone, *SegGala* is about as simple as simple can be – left, right and shoot are the only controls that are used in pushing the PS2 hardware to its very limits, but for a few minutes of fun you can't go far wrong here.

BERZERK

Berzerk is an odd one. Underneath its 8-bit façade lurks a curiously appealing shooter that mimics the likes of *Smash TV* and *Robotron* but, unfortunately, the fun is all too fleeting.

HARD WIRED

Easily the pick of all the PD ROMs we found, *Hard Wired* takes its cues from *Desert Strike* and *Red Zone* – fly around in a helicopter and blow things up to your heart's content. Visually, this is more accomplished than many commercial releases and is well worth a look, if only to see effects that you never realised the Mega Drive could do.

GREAT GAME BOSSES

GAME TENGOKU: THE GAME PARADISE

Format: Saturn
Release: 1997
Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: In-House



Fans of *Parodius* and *Twin Bee* will find themselves instantly at home with *Game Tengoku*, as it's one of the cutest shooters to ever appear on a home console. If you don't believe jaded old hacks like us, you only need to make your way to the second level, where you'll discover one of the cutest critters that ever tasted hot plasma.

Flying into an arcade grabber machine, you'll immediately find yourself soaring over a landscape of stuffed toys, not to mention getting buffeted by various objects thrown by a mysterious assailant.

Before long, a huge flying teddy appears on screen and attempts to send you to your maker. If that wasn't enough, a cute fairy armed with a giant laser beam joins him and the screen becomes a chaotic mess of bright colours and multiple bullets. Still, they're nothing a seasoned shmupper can't deal with and you'll soon be ready for the main showdown…

Making her way from beneath a mound of cuddly toys, you're greeted by your mysterious opponent, who has to be one of the cutest characters we've ever seen. A bizarre cross between a girl and a cat, this huge boss gaily laughs at you as she spins around and throws various items towards your tiny craft. Every now and then, she'll pause for a few moments and you'll need to shoot at the giant bell around her neck.

After some frantic blasting, the green-haired beauty eventually sinks back into the pile of toys from whence she came, but not before displaying a big heart to show how much she loves you. Aww…

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME

A Great RETRO Gaming Moment

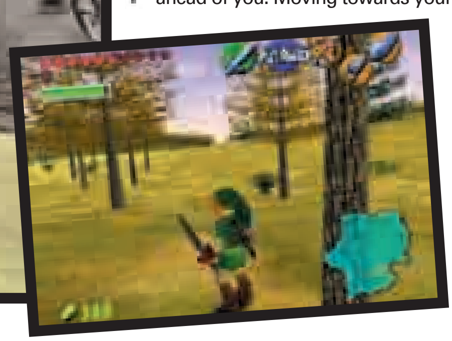
EXPLORING THE GREAT UNKNOWN

It's safe to say that Nintendo's masterpiece is filled with countless classic moments, but stepping out onto Hyrule Field for the first time must surely rank as one of the game's most-remembered set pieces. You've only been playing for a short time, but already you've marvelled at the Deku Tree, witnessed a poignant farewell with childhood friend Saria and defeated the vile Gohma Queen, but your adventure hasn't even really started.

System: N64
Year: 1998
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-House



▲ It looks okay now, but don't stay out too long in Hyrule…



After talking to a wise old owl, you're told to visit Hyrule Castle and speak to Princess Zelda, but first you have to have to make your way there. As you reach the edge of Hyrule Field, you're immediately gobsmacked by the sheer scale of Miyamoto-san's vision – Death Mountain can be seen far off to your right, while Hyrule Castle stands like a welcoming beacon some distance ahead of you. Moving towards your destination, you quickly realise that the sun is languorously drifting through the Hyrulean sky and your shadow is growing ever longer.

Hurrying forward, a sense of dread begins to fill you as the last few traces of light slowly begin to fade, only to be replaced with an ever-deepening darkness. Just as you approach the castle gates, the drawbridge (your salvation) starts to rise and you watch dumbfounded as your only way of entry is blocked.

Without warning, two ferocious skeletons immediately rise up from the newly disturbed ground and move to attack you. It looks like it's going to be a very long night in Hyrule…

FIND A CLOCK, TURN IT BACK, THEN PLAY SOME OLD GAMES AND REVIEW THEM BY TODAY'S STANDARDS. THAT'S WHAT WE'VE DONE WITH THREE CLASSIC TITLES, BUT HAVE THEY WITHSTOOD THE PASSAGE OF TIME?

GUNHED

Another great PC Engine shooter

Format: PC Engine
Publisher: Hudson Soft
Developer: Toho/Sunrise
Release: 1989
Price: £39.99

NEC's PC Engine may not have as many well-known characters as the Master System and NES, but its got plenty of great shooters to keep you entertained. Thanks to its impressive hardware, the PC Engine is able to throw a staggering amount of sprites around on screen at any one time – something that's fully apparent with the excellent *Gunhed*.

From your first shot to your final deadly showdown, you're constantly assaulted by wave after wave of deadly foes who are all intent on blowing your ship into a hundred tiny pieces. Fortunately, there's an absolutely massive array of power-ups to choose from (complete with some nice digitised speech), and before long you'll be enjoying an impressive array of dangerous weaponry.



DARRAN **From the insanely smooth scrolling to the sprites jam-packed onto the screen, *Gunhed* is an absolute joy. Sure, I may be overly enthusiastic (I adore shmups) but I can't see how anyone wouldn't be impressed with this ace blaster. While it's not without its faults – I found the speech a little indistinct and it seemed quite easy once I was powered up – but this is sterling stuff. Let's hope we get some sequels…**

Considering the sheer ferocity with which you're attacked, *Gunhed* is never unfair; when death does inevitably arrive, it's always down to your own thumb and not some unfair collision detection. The likes of *Gunhed* truly show off the power of NEC's tiny machine and you'll be in awe at the vibrant colours, fantastic sound and arcade-like quality of this top blaster.

Of course, this game isn't perfect and, like *Gradius*, it suffers from a high difficulty factor that manifests itself whenever you lose a precious life. One minute you're maxed out

RISE OF THE ROBOTS

Some things are not worth waiting for…

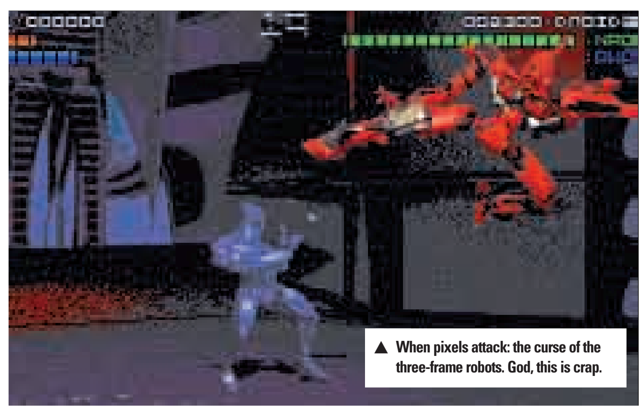
Format: Amiga/Multi
Publisher: Mirage
Developer: Instinct Design
Release: 1994
Price: £29.99

To say that we've been looking forward to *Rise Of The Robots* is a bit of an understatement. Ever since we were wowed by the revolutionary 'pre-rendered graphics', we've been itching to get our hands on a title that Instinct Design has claimed will be a '*Street Fighter II*-beater'. Oh, how wrong they were…

Now that we've finally been able to play the game, we simply can't believe that Mirage genuinely thought it was onto a winner. This is easily one of the most disappointing games that we've played on any machine, let alone one as powerful as the Amiga. Ambition is a dangerous tool in the wrong hands, and while the game looks reasonably decent in stills (although it's a far cry from the gorgeous visuals we were promised) everything falls apart once the robots start moving.

Promising a hundred frames of animation for each robot is mighty impressive and we're not surprised that this wasn't achieved in the finished code. However, we weren't expecting 97 of those frames to be missing… As unbelievable as it sounds, each character goes from a simple standing pose to either a kick, punch or jump. It's utterly horrifying and simply shouldn't be seen in this day and age.

Despite our disappointment with the visuals (and we don't want to talk about the horrendous Brian May score), it's the gameplay that truly disappoints. Believe it or not, Instinct Design, but a good beat-'em-up does not involve knocking your opponent into a corner then using the same move over and over



▲ When pixels attack: the curse of the three-frame robots. God, this is crap.

SIMON **'Shocking' is the first word that springs to mind; the second is unprintable. Everything that Instinct Design promised has failed to materialise and we're left with a hollow shell of a game that has hardly any redeeming features. The concept of huge fighting robots is a sound one, but the execution is awful. Easily one of the biggest letdowns of the year.**

In Retrospect

While *Gunhed* is still a superb example of the genre, for many it's since been eclipsed by better shooters on the PC Engine (especially after the addition of CD support). For shmup fans, the likes of *Super Star Soldier, Lords Of Thunder* and *1941* are all pleasing alternatives to *Gunhed*'s charms, but if you're after an unadulterated blaster, a copy of this title will still delight.

and delivering unholy amounts of devastation, the next you're frantically trying to survive an intense hail of bullets.

If you're looking for an all-out blaster with superb visuals, hectic gameplay and a huge challenge though, *Gunhed* won't disappoint.

Presentation:	86%
Graphics:	88%
Sound:	90%
Gameplay	89%
Lifespan	94%
OVERALL	**91%**

In Retrospect

Ambition was one of *Rise Of The Robots*' biggest flaws. With Mirage aiming to publish it on every format possible, it was perhaps inevitable that the title would suffer. The limited gameplay is even more painfully apparent in today's world of fast-paced fighters, and this is one game that really hasn't stood the test of time.

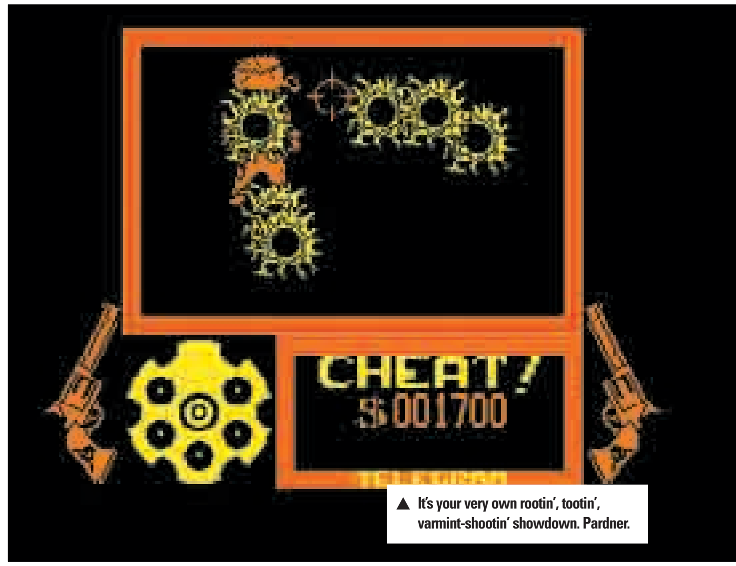
again. There's no strategy to the fights, no incentive to reach later challengers and no point in buying this sorry piece of software. Avoid like the worst sort of plague.

Presentation:	60%
Graphics:	81%
Sound:	45%
Gameplay	26%
Lifespan	20%
OVERALL	**31%**

GUNFRIGHT

More Filmation action from Ultimate

Format: Amstrad CPC 464
Publisher/Developer: Ultimate: Play The Game
Release: 1986
Price: £9.99



▲ It's your very own rootin', tootin', varmint-shootin' showdown. Pardner.

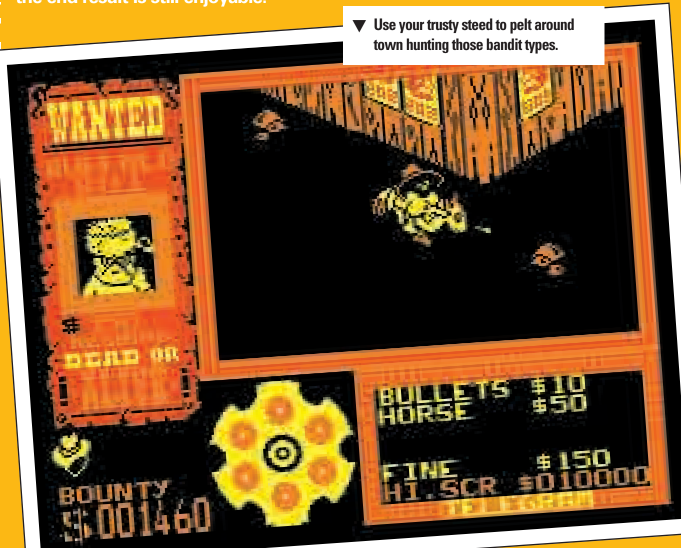
Whenever a new idea gains popularity and takes hold, you can guarantee that there'll be a huge number of competitors ready to jump on the bandwagon. After *Knight Lore* impressed with its isometric splendour and taxing puzzles, it seems like everyone (including Ultimate) is more than happy to churn out more of the same.

Sometimes they succeed (*Head Over Heels*), sometimes they fail (*Cylu*), and other times they're caught somewhere in between – and that's where we find *Gunfright*. No doubt wanting to continue the success of *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*, *Gunfright* is yet another Filmation title from Ultimate. This time around, though, you're a Sheriff who has to track down several unsavoury bandits. Once they've been found (by following amusing Mexicans who point out the way) you're immediately transported to a 2D duel where you must get the drop on your adversary before he eliminates you.

There's plenty of the Ultimate humour we've become accustomed to, and the various gameplay modes are a nice touch as well. It's a lot trickier than *Knight Lore* (it's all too easy to suddenly walk straight into a character without seeing them which results in a frustrating death), but there's enough variation here to make *Gunfright* still satisfying to play. It might not be the best Ultimate game we've ever seen, but fans will no doubt go wild.

LUKE ***Gunfright* may not immediately grab you like *Knight Lore*, but I'm still pleased with the overall result. The 2D duels are good fun, the visuals are as slick as ever and the title tune is great. The controls seem a lot more sluggish than *Knight Lore*'s and it's a lot harder to avoid enemies, but the end result is still enjoyable.**

▼ Use your trusty steed to pelt around town hunting those bandit types.



In Retrospect

While not the best Filmation title from Ultimate, there are still plenty of interesting features to make this worth checking out. The duels themselves are still enjoyable (even if it is tricky going from isometric to 2D play in a split second), but *Gunfright* has been eclipsed in gamers' memories by superior titles – most notably *Head Over Heels* and the original *Knight Lore*.

Presentation:	75%
Graphics:	88%
Sound:	82%
Gameplay	88%
Lifespan	86%
OVERALL	**86%**

CHUN WAH KONG



interviewed by **DARRAN JONES**

If there's one thing you can count on in the games industry, it's diversity. Take Chun Wah Kong – one minute he's a quality assurance tester for Thomas The Tank Engine, the next he's working on one of Sony's biggest series. A change can do you good…



▲ What will we be travelling in when the future arrives? Landers, that's what. Order yours today.

The suburbs of Hong Kong were a stomping ground for Nintendo's Famicom in the Eighties, so it was one of the last places you'd expect to find an Atari 2600. But this was Chun Wah Kong's first gaming memory. "One of our neighbours had the Atari and I remember all the kids in the neighbourhood queuing outside their apartment in order to play *Outlaw*," he reminisces. Before long, Kong was able to skip the queues and was playing games in his own home. His first computer? An Amstrad CPC 464. "It was the one with the built-in tape deck and colour monitor," he explains. "The first game I bought for it with my hard-earned pocket money was Codemasters' *BMX Simulator*."

Unsurprisingly, a love of games was kick-started and Kong started to approach developers in the hope of getting a job. "When I was around 14 or 15, I would regularly write up my latest game ideas and send them off to whoever was my favourite devco at the time," he explains. Elite started receiving regular letters, but things didn't really progress any further. "I didn't really have much luck with Elite, but they were nice enough to write back sometimes, which was very encouraging."

With school finished, it wasn't long before a friend got in touch with an interesting proposal… "I was asked if I was interested in games testing," Kong remembers. "A week later, at the age of 18, I started my first videogames job at Software Creations testing games like *Thomas The Tank Engine* on the NES. The next title I got to test was the brilliant SNES game, *Plok*. Software Creations did some fabulously original games under the creative direction of the Pickford brothers back then and I have some great memories of my time there."

FIGHTING TALK

Kong soon found himself developing games instead of testing them and began work on the SNES version of *Maximum Carnage*. "That was the first game where I made my tiny mark as a designer," he reveals. "The studio directors were well aware of my love of beat-'em-ups so they decided to give me the chance. Fortunately, Software Creations was already very clued up on the SNES. With *Maximum Carnage*, we went wild and had great fun creating the moves and effects for each superhero. Looking back now, I probably made the game a tad too hard for everyone's liking, but it was still quite well received, so I'm more than happy."

▼ "Walk away if you must," sobbed Roger, "but I think we're worth more than that."





▲ Learn to speak Cockney and buy a pair of gor blimey trousers for the full *Getaway* experience.

When the 16-bit reign came to an end, Kong found himself at Psygnosis and wrestling with the transition from 2D to 3D; something that he feels still causes problems for many developers. "I think there are still many design issues to overcome when dealing with a true 3D environment," Kong says. "Positioning of cameras and player-character targeting are probably the two functions that give designers the biggest headaches, and the actual move to 3D seemed a lot harder for the programmers. It was much easier for the artists to step up in graphical quality, but quite a few programmers struggled to replicate convincing physics and lighting effects."

GET AWAY

Despite working for a company that had produced such classics as *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby*, Kong says he never felt under pressure at Psygnosis. "It was a time when some companies finally started believing in the need for designers," he says. "I think many companies to this day still very much undervalue the contribution of good designers, and great designers are definitely very difficult to find. I don't believe in the concept of design by committee – what you end up getting there is a soulless by-product of committee thinking, a mess that is neither here nor there."

About 18 months after Kong joined Psygnosis, Sony showed an interest in the company and Kong began working on *The Getaway*; and, as he reveals, getting people to see past the game's hype became extremely difficult. "*The Getaway* remained very much a technical demo until very late on in the project," Kong says. "The visuals were very important because of the type of game we were trying to make and I think we succeeded in raising the bar in that area."

Although Kong realises that he's got job security at a company as large as Sony, he's aware of just how difficult it continues to be for smaller devcos. "The smaller companies are definitely finding it difficult to compete head-on with the big-budget titles from EA," Kong laments. "It's almost like a small art-house film having to go head-to-head with a summer Hollywood movie. I don't think games are becoming too expensive to make in order to make a decent return, it's just a bigger risk because you have to make sure what you are making is great without being too quirky. I hope it puts people in the position to be more creative with their products, as there are just way too many sequels in the current market.

"It certainly very different now compared to how it was ten years ago," Kong continues. "Because of the size of projects, you could turn things round really quickly even with a small team. These days, it's like steering an oil tanker compared to a speedboat. The challenge is totally different and you need to develop skills outside of the normal design work that you'd do to make the team work."

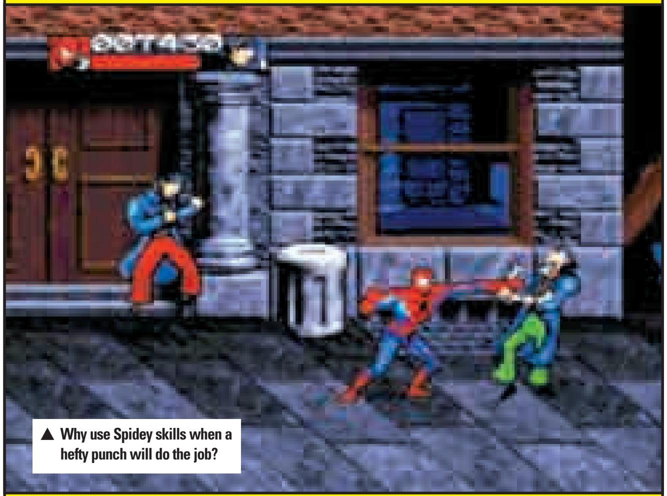
These days Kong is hard at work on *The Getaway 2: Black Monday*, and when he's not creating games is happy playing them; he's building up a collection of arcade boards – much to the annoyance of his wife. "I definitely have a soft spot for retro games," Kong says. "*Double Dragon*, *Kung Fu Master* and *Bubble Bobble* are all my favourites from yesteryear, but due to living in a tiny flat I'm limited to what I can buy… I should have bought more machines before I got married."

SOFTOGRAPHY

Kong's leap from testing to designing came about at Software Creations when his bosses gave him the chance to prove his talents and indulge his love of beat-'em-ups. Which was nice of them.

Design:

The Getaway 2 (PS2)........ 2004
The Getaway (PS2)........ 2002
Lander (PC)........1999
Spiral Saga (PSone)........Cancelled
Separation Anxiety (SNES/MD/PC)........1996
Cutthroat Island (SNES/MD/GB/GG)........1996
Maximum Carnage (SNES/MD)........1994



▲ Why use Spidey skills when a hefty punch will do the job?

Q&A

Tin Star (SNES)........ 1994
Ken Griffey Jr. Presents MLB (SNES)........ 1994
Bart And The Beanstalk (GB)........1994
Plok (SNES)........ 1993
Solstice 2: Equinox (SNES)........ 1993
Thomas The Tank Engine (SNES/NES)........1993

Retro Contact

Share your views about old-school gaming

First Contact
If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at:
games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

I LIKE TO SCORE

Dear games™

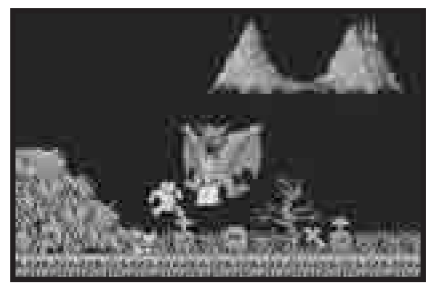
Thank you for writing such a great mag – I love **games™** for the Retro section alone. Being 29, I've been around since the good old days of the Spectrum, Acorn Electron, C64 and so on and am glad for all your retro coverage. This New Testament is indeed the way forward for a games magazine by going backwards.

For me, there is one thing that made these games from 20 years ago so damn addictive – getting high scores. Would it be possible to include a high-score board for retro games in your mag please? Also, what about a section dedicated to Walter Day of Twin Galaxies, the world number-one guru on computer and videogame high scores? I think many a retro fan would find this guy and his book very interesting indeed. He goes into great depth on the subject of the birth and death of the golden age and it's a fascinating read.

By the way, about 12 months ago I hit just over 1 million on *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, fourth time round. Very hard indeed.

I G Maloney

■ **The high-score table seems like a good plan. It would require careful implementation, but we'll look into it. A *Twin Galaxies* feature is a great idea and one's that's been on the backburner for some time now, so expect something soon. Oh, and well done on that score – impressive, most impressive.**



OI! WHERE'S OIDS?

Dear games™

Another great retro section this month (issue 19) let down by one minor detail: you did not include the greatest Atari ST game of all time – *Oids*… not even in the two pages of screenshots. So dig out an ST and find a copy, you will find an absolute gem of a game.

Neil, via email

■ **Thanks for the tip, Neil. We'll take a look next time the Atari is pulled out of the cupboard. Who knows, maybe we'll cover *Oids* in greater detail in the future. Watch, as usual, this space.**



GIANT GAMING BRAIN

Dear games™

Regarding your caption on page 145 of issue 19 and your *Star Soldier* review – "this was the best blaster on the NES" – I'm not sure anyone would agree with you on that. The NES/ Famicom played host to a vast number of superior shooters, with titles such as Konami's *Crisis Force* and *Summer Carnival 92 Recca* being two good examples of better blasters.

The main reason for *Star Soldier*'s historical importance, and something you should have mentioned, is that it was the game featured in the Hudson 'National Rally 16-Blast' championship – a TV-hosted shooter tournament in the late Eighties in Japan that had the nation's gamers salivating. The winner of this tournament, 'Master Takahashi', went on to star in his own series of games, the *Adventure Island* games (or *Takahashimeijin no Boukenjima*).

Which leads me on to another point. The reason for the stated lack of charm in Master Higgins (in the *Adventure Island* remake review) is because he is, in fact, Master Takahashi, a well-known gaming icon in Japan only, recognised by all Japanese NES/Famicom gamers worth their salt. Undeniably, then, the *Star Soldier* and *Adventure Island* games are strongly connected, though few Western

gamers know it. How could you have missed this in the remake reviews?

Overall, excellent retro features this month, the remake reviews were a great touch. As always, keep up the good work, and may **games**™ always have high sales.

John Szczepaniak, France

■ **Thanks for the information, John. As for why we didn't mention it, we honestly didn't know. The history of gaming spans over 30 years, which is a lot to take in. Still, thanks for setting us straight on this matter, and for giving us another nugget of gaming trivia with which to corner people at parties…**

STAR LETTER ■ STAR LETTER

Dear games™

Firstly, congratulations on the concept of the family tree – it's an excellent idea that's very well implemented.

Secondly, would it be possible to do a feature on the sadly departed Jay Miner, who, in my eyes, was to hardware what Miyamoto is to software? I know of his involvement in the Atari 400/800 series and the Amiga, but would be very interested to get more in-depth information on him.

Finally, I would like to heartily endorse the trawl through softco's back catalogues for old titles to bring to current hardware. Two titles I would love to see again are *Rainbow Islands* and *Rodland*, both of which I remember very fondly. Do you have any news on these titles?

Keep up the good work.

Roland Casewell, via email

■ **We're always looking for interesting new ideas for features and will definitely be looking into your request. Both *Rainbow Islands* and *Rodland* are firm favourites in the office, so you can expect to see more coverage on them in a future issue, though we don't know if there are any plans to bring them to current-generation consoles. So many games, so little time…**

DANISH DELIGHT

Dear games™

I'd like to make your readers aware of a new website that specialises in obscure consoles and everything that could be of interest to a dedicated console collector. It's a free online museum of weird gaming hardware, software and merchandise.

Called Playright, this is the largest collection of rare videogame history in the world, and more is being added all the time. You'll be able to view everything from the Dreamcast/TV combination Divers 2000 to the Panasonic M2, the SEGA Neptune, prototypes of Dreamcast designs, the blue Kasumi-chan Xbox, unreleased software, and development systems for a whole bunch of different consoles.

Also featured is the website of Sporup Arcade Museum – the world's largest collection of arcade games. From the early classics like *Ms. Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *Bomb Jack* and *Bubble Bobble* across SEGA's moving machines such as *Space Harrier* and *Out Run* to modern Neo Geo classics like *Metal Slug*, all the old machines can be played at Sporup Arcade Museum.

We hope you will have fun with this brand new online museum of videogame extravaganza. To view the website go to: www.uk.playright.dk

Mikael Buch Smedegaard, via email

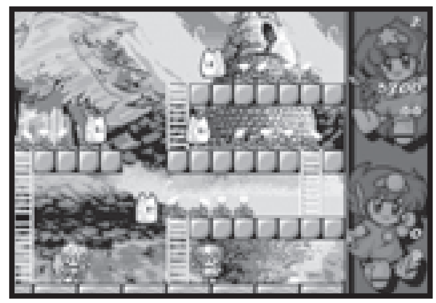
■ **Well, it's a sneaky plug, but it's a great site with lots of interesting retro facts for anyone with a passion for out-of-the-ordinary hardware and software. Sporup looks extremely interesting too, though the UK's Retrokade has beaten it when it comes to dedicated cabs. Next time we're in Denmark, we'll have to check it out.**

THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

Dear games™

Are the Retro Buyers' Guide prices based on internet or high-street prices? I do not have internet access and have to buy my games from shops and mail order, but your guide is the first thing I usually turn to when buying a new console.

If your guide is for the high street should it not be the same as GameStation, as in my eyes they are the only shops to have a good nationwide coverage of retro games? However,



as their prices are vastly different from your own, I'm wondering if I'm being ripped off.

Martin Stableford, Newcastle Upon Tyne

■ **Our prices are an amalgamation of both high-street and internet figures. The reason we don't quote the same prices as GameStation is because there are plenty of other stores that still sell large amounts of retro consoles, so we don't want to look like we're endorsing a particular chain. Our section is only intended as a guide and as long as you're happy with your purchase, you've never really been ripped off.**

Retro

C•L•A•S•S•I•C C•O•N•S•O•L•E

BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

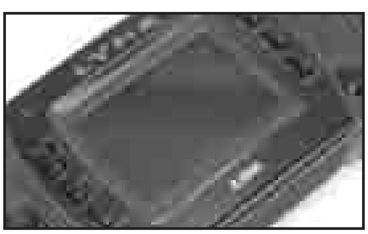
ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

MACHINE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** Atari Lynx
- **PRICE:** £15-25 with games
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  Klax (est price £12)
  Electrocop (est price £7)
  California Games (est price £9)
- It might have suffered an extremely short battery life, but the Atari Lynx was home to some great titles and can be extremely cheap to pick up.

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-200
PC Engine GT	£150-200
Super Grafx	£200-300

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-150
SEGA Saturn	£20-35
Dreamcast	£20-40

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£30-50

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Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.

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LOT 69 – *Harvest Moon* for Game Boy Color. Like new. £16. Bucks.

LOT 72 – *Aladdin* for Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

LOT 75 – *Yu Suzuki Gameworks* book with Dreamcast disc of six classic arcade titles, including *OutRun*, *After Burner* etc. Mint condition. £50. Wilts.

LOT 80 – *Soukyugurentai* (black cover, Japanese version) for SEGA Saturn. Good condition with box and instructions. £35 plus p+p. North Yorks.

LOT 81 – Unboxed Pikachu N64 with five games – *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, *Pokémon Snap*, *Pokémon Stadium 2* and *Mario Tennis*. All in excellent condition apart from *Turok* box. All manuals included. Good working order. £40. Glasgow.

LOT 82 – TV Tuner for SEGA Game Gear. Unboxed but in good condition. £25 plus p+p. Glasgow.

LOT 86 – *Radiant Silvergun* for Japanese Saturn. Mint condition, includes spine card. £180. Salisbury.

LOT 86 – N64 with 12 games including *Clay Fighters*, *Turok*, *Pokémon Snap*, *Conker's Bad Fur Day* and *GoldenEye*. All games are cartridges only and there is no box for the console. £100. Blackpool.

LOT 88 – *Sabre Wulf* for the Spectrum. No box or instructions, but the game does work. £2.50.

LOT 89 – Amiga 500 with 20 games including *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, *Stunt Car Racer*, *Zool*, *The Secret Of Monkey Island* and *Eye Of The Beholder*. Comes with all relevant leads and is perfect for a beginner. £120. Southampton.

LOT 90 – Neo-Geo AES with two joysticks, a memory card and 11 great games including *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos*, *Metal Slug 3* and *4*, *Matrimelee*, *Fatal Fury Special* and *Alpha Mission* (games are Japanese and English, contact for further details). £1,000 ONO. I will consider splitting. Contact Shane at shamus1roks@yahoo.co.uk

LOT 92 – Games: *Daytona USA* (Saturn, PAL), excellent condition, £2. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (Amiga, PAL), good condition, £1.50. *Zero Wing* (Mega Drive, PAL), good condition, £7. *Golden Axe 3* (Mega Drive, NTSC), excellent condition, £27. *Soukyugurentai* (Saturn, black cover, NTSC), excellent condition, £28. garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 93 – Chipped Japanese Dreamcast in see-through case. Comes with Japanese version of *Crazy Taxi*, *Psyvariar 2*, *Capcom Vs SNK*, *Cosmic Smash*, *Ikaruga*, *House Of The Dead 2*, *Powerstone*, *Giga Wing* and *Street Fighter 3rd Strike*. £180.

FOR SALE – LOT 94

FASELEI!

for the Neo Geo Pocket (US version). Good condition, with instructions and clam shell. Will accept £40 (ono) including P+P.

Best Buy

WANTED

WANTED 35 – *King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002* for Neo Geo AES. Must be boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 36 – Commodore 64 and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

WANTED 38 – *Mean Machines* magazines. Any issues, but not 3, 14, 15 or 19. Must be in good condition. Price negotiable. London.

WANTED 41 – SEGA 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 44 – *Sonic CD* for SEGA Mega CD. Will pay up to£30.

WANTED 46 – *Metal Slug* for Neo-Geo AES. Will pay reasonable price if in good condition. Essex.

WANTED 47 – *Illbleed* for SEGA Dreamcast. Any version, good price paid. Contact Andrew Hulme at ashulme1983@hotmail.com

WANTED 48 – *Bug* or *Bug Too* for SEGA Saturn (PAL version only) in working condition. Please contact Mark Wales at crazy-yak@think-yak.com

WANTED 49 - *Sonic 1*, *Sonic 2*, *Sonic3* and *Sonic & Knuckles*. Don't mind if they don't have boxes but would prefer boxes and manuals. Will pay £5 each. Contact iantennie@hotmail.com

WANTED 50 – Commodore Amiga with *Battle Chess*. Don't want to pay more than £100. Contact paulnorrie@ntlworld.com.

WANTED 51 – *Elevator Action Returns* for SEGA Saturn. Must be mint and must include spine. Will pay reasonable price.

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PLAYSTATION2

MANUFACTURER Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £139.99



The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House	The original is still the best by a long shot
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The two games that pretty much put the PS2 where it is
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so-enjoyable
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
Metal Slug 3 IMPORT	Playmore	In-House	Old-school shooting has never been so much fun
NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The daddy of basketball games – no contest
Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House	If you only own one football game, it should be this
Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rez	SEGA	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Suikoden III IMPORT	Konami	In-House	Konami's RPG series is still as good as it ever was
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Suikoden III

The fourth instalment is already confirmed for a UK release, so now's the time to be playing through this one.



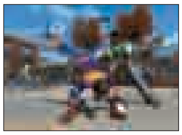
Hitman: Contracts

Requires more skill than most other overly-violent games we can think of. The thinking man's killing spree.



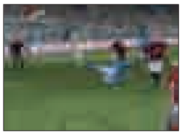
NBA Street 2

To us, this is infinitely more enjoyable than 'proper' basketball. Who needs rules when you can just show off?



Pro Evolution Soccer 3

If you need us to give you a reason to own Konami's definitive football game, you need your head examined.



Tony Hawk's Underground

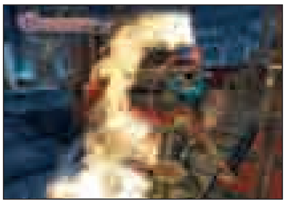
Stick to the skating rather than the running around and you'll find the best example of the genre yet.



VIEWPOINT

ONIMUSHA 3:

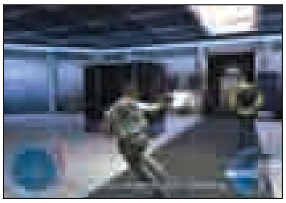
A return to form for Capcom's samurai series – and just when we thought the company was running out of ideas, too. This is a hugely absorbing adventure that finds just the right balance between fighting and puzzle sections.



VIEWPOINT

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

Considering how highly rated the original PSone games were, we're more than a little disappointed that this PS2 effort turned out to be so lacklustre. Not even the online mode can save it from being incredibly tedious.

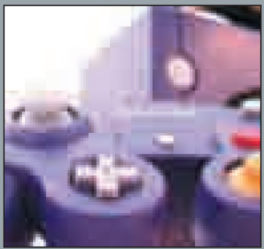


VIEWPOINT

SPACE CHANNEL 5 – PART TWO

Did it really need all this time before someone got round to bringing this delight of a game to the shores of Britain? Whatever the reason, it's here now and we're all the happier for it – if only for Space Michael, of course.






XBOX

MANUFACTURER Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £129.99



Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive	Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade flavour
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt
Halo	Microsoft	Bungie	The game that sold a million Xboxes
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a title
Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
Panzer Dragoon Orta	SEGA	Smilebit	Classic shoot-'em-up action, the SEGA way
Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations	Redefining how we play games online
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	In-House	Fairly decent action-strategy that comes alive online
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	In-House	Even better than the original, with a storming Live mode
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Ion Storm	Splinter Cell for the medieval age? Sounds good to us…
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical	More multiplayer fun than most other FPS games
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

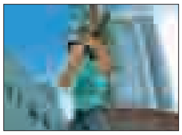
Rainbow Six 3

Still the game that sees the most play around here as far as Xbox Live goes – we just can't get enough of it.



GTA: Double Pack

With no chance of seeing *San Andreas* any time soon, you can still enjoy the best versions of the other games.



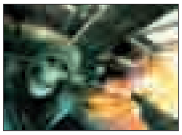
Star Wars: KOTOR

If you haven't finished everything this game has to offer, you'd better hurry – the sequel's on its way already.



TimeSplitters 2

Multiplayer fun in its very purest form. If you've got the time to create your own maps, it can go on forever…



Splinter Cell: PT

Online takes some getting used to, but it can be as exciting as anything once you've learnt what to do.



VIEWPOINT

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

The idea of setting a stealth-style game in medieval times might sound a bit bizarre, but Ion Storm (and, more specifically, Will Spector) has pulled it off almost perfectly. A nice way to keep the series ticking over…



VIEWPOINT

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

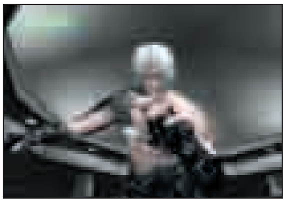
Considering the whole simulation angle that THQ's game takes, it's still surprisingly good fun to play; especially if you can indulge in a little co-operative action with your mates. Not for everyone, but definitely worth checking out.



VIEWPOINT

BREAKDOWN

Much as we hate to admit it, our original suspicions were right when we said that Namco's innovative first-person fighter would be disappointing, despite doing something clever. From what we can tell, *Chronicles Of Riddick* already does it better.



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

GAMECUBE

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



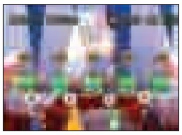
Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

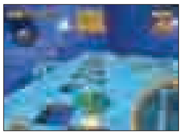
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
1080° Avalanche	Nintendo	In-House	A markedly different game to the competition
Animal Crossing IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo	Square-Enix	Different from the norm, with a distinct multiplayer flavour
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	SEGA does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the *Animal Crossing* of farming games
Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo	In-House	Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami	Silicon Knights	Hardly innovative, but still a great game in its own right
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House	A genre-redefining title in every sense
Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House	Still as scary as it was when it first came out
Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	In-House	An interesting twist on the *Resident Evil* franchise
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Super Monkey Ball 2	SEGA	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	In-House	Looks great, plays even better
Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$ IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Zelda: Four Swords Adventures IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The perfect excuse to have your friends round all the time
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	One of the many reasons to own a GameCube

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

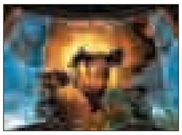
Mario Party 5
Definitely a highlight of the series, if only because the single-player game is actually quite fun.



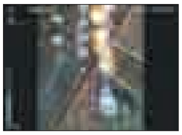
Super Monkey Ball 2
So, hands up if you've managed to finish this game properly. No-one? Well, you'd better get back to it.



Metroid Prime
The only perfect ten we've felt inclined to dish out so far – and we still stand by that decision.



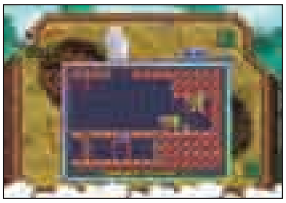
Ikaruga
Perhaps not as essential as the Dreamcast version, but then that's hardly an excuse not to buy this.



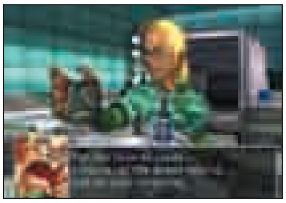
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour
Out at last and still a good laugh, whether you're playing with friends or putting about by yourself.



VIEWPOINT
ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES
Cast those cynical thoughts aside – Nintendo has finally proved that the whole concept of connectivity is actually a worthwhile investment. If only it hadn't dropped *Tetra's Trackers* for the English release.

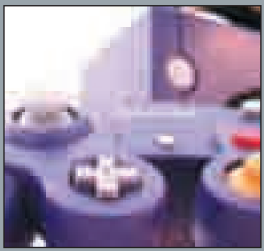


VIEWPOINT
CUSTOM ROBO
It's a mecha game, it's an RPG… or perhaps it's just an excuse to have big lumbering robots blasting the hell of each other. Whichever it is, though, Nintendo's build-your-own-robo adventure is still good fun, if a little limited at times.



VIEWPOINT
ANIMAL CROSSING
Just when we thought we'd got over our *Animal Crossing* addition, it's a double whammy – a DS version *and* the UK release now looming for September. Time to go back to that village and tidy up… you know, just in case we get any visitors.






GBA

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
MEDIA Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is also available now in a variety of colours.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Advance Wars 2	Nintendo	In-House
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Square-Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo	In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft	Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo	AlphaDream
Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator	Electronic Arts	In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo	In-House
Pinball Challenge Deluxe	Ubisoft	Binary 9
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	SEGA
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft	Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
Super Mario Advance 4: SMB 3	Nintendo	In-House
Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$	Nintendo	In-House
Yu-Gi-Oh!: World Championship 2004	Konami	In-House
Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

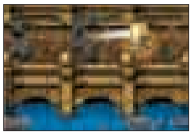
Boktai: Sun Is In Your Hand

It's finally out now and so is the summer sunshine – what more of an excuse do you need to play this adventure?



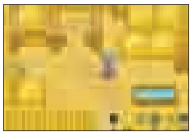
MOH: Infiltrator

Probably one of the best *Medal Of Honor* games for a long while… and on a GBA too. Surprised? So were we.



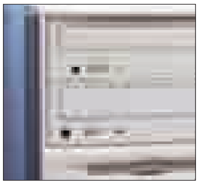
Harvest Moon: FOMT

Not exactly a new game (it's a remake, technically) but still one that'll steal almost all your spare time.



PC

MANUFACTURER N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
MEDIA 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

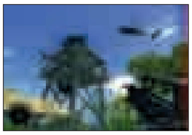
TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
Call Of Duty	Activision	Infinity Ward
Championship Manager 03/04	Eidos	Sports Interactive
Day of Defeat	Activision	Valve Software
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
Far Cry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
System Shock	EA	Looking Glass Games
The Sims	EA	Maxis
TRON 2.0	Buena Vista	Monolith
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Far Cry

Looks great, but plays even better – and all that becomes clear before you even get past the first few areas. Great stuff.



Sensible World Of Soccer

A blast from the past that doesn't stop being one of the most enjoyable football games we've ever played.



Rise Of Nations

With several add-on packs now available, there's never been a better time to get this great Microsoft RTS.



NEXT MONTH IN GAMES™

BC





With fingers in so many gaming pies, it's no wonder Peter Molyneux and Intrepid are taking their time over this prehistoric masterpiece. We go back in time to find out more…

ON SALE 12 AUGUST '04



180 PAGES OF DINOSAUR-BASHING EXCELLENCE

NEXT MONTH

MORE… PREVIEWS

There'll be plenty of great titles to whet your gaming appetite next month, plus in-depth coverage of Square Enix's latest in the *Final Fantasy* series – a sight that's really not to be missed.

MORE… REVIEWS

Once again, it's time for some fairly critical decision making as the likes of *Sudeki*, *The Chronicles Of Riddick*, *Future Tactics*, *Silent Hill 4: The Room* and *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* will be going up against our tough review panel to see if they've got what it takes.

MORE… FEATURES

games™ digs into the remnants of Rage to meet the team behind Acclaim's high-octane racer *Juiced*; Dave Perry helps us open a whole new can of worms in a frank interview; and we prove that the Apple Macintosh is more of a gaming monster than you might have ever imagined. Plus Retro digs into the world of sporting videogames and asks whether realism is really as important as people think…

Please note: Due to late code and unforeseen circumstances and stuff, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it, like words and pictures and what have you.

CONTACT
ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

APPARENTLY THE GAMES INDUSTRY IS DOOMED – NO WOMEN, RISING PRICES, CONSTANT SCAPEGOATING AND A COMPLETE LACK OF ORIGINALITY. BUT THEN, THAT'S JUST YOUR OPINION…

Good Lord, you're a pessimistic lot – anyone would wonder why you bother with this gaming lark. Remember, it takes more muscles to frown than to smile… or something. Miserable gits.

MAKING CONTACT

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™
Highbury Entertainment
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you've bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

Step Three:
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**Pirates**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

ABOUT ONE OUT of a hundred games today have something original that is noticeable, but most of this isn't really any good. Now think back to the last time a game really rocked your world, and think about how it did something new, something exciting, something that was enjoyable. In issue 18 you did a small column about this problem (Games Room 101), but it didn't really cover the scope of copycat games.

For instance, ever since the original *Unreal Tournament* uncovered its awesome Sniper Rifle every FPS has had some kind of long-range rifle. Even *The Sims* wasn't the first game in which the player had to make decisions that would affect their creations' life – it was beaten to the punch by *Black & White*, and I bet that borrowed some ideas along the line.

I could name hundreds of *Diablo* clones, and virtually every FPS follows the same principles as the original *Doom*. Yet when you look at most of the big hits on the market they are riddled with original touches, some bigger than others, but each adds to the enjoyment. They push the boundaries, try new things and make steps for other games to follow.

I'm not saying that unoriginal games are bad – there is many an occasion when a game does a concept better than the original – but if developers would try to think what would give their game the edge, we might see better games in the future.
David Walker

games™: You might be being a bit blinkered, there – after all, originality is rare these days and it's possible to say that every game poaches ideas from another title if you look hard enough. What's more, with games costing so much to develop, some publishers would rather 'give the people what they want' than stick their neck out. Still, you're not the only one who thinks like this…

WHY DO ALL games think they have to please everyone? It seems developers think they have to include a stealth section in every platformer; most first-person shooters have some platforming in them; even sports sims like *Tiger Woods* include an arcade mode. This takes all the originality out of games. How can you have a new idea if most of the game is filled up with old ones? I would much rather have one great game than three average ones stuck together.

Nintendo is the only company that seems to make games that do what they say on the pack. For example, *Mario Kart* doesn't try to be a racing sim; it's an arcade racer and doesn't try to be anything else. Then you look at the *Ridge Racer* series – they were classic arcade racers. The latest game, *R Racing Evolution*, has ruined its reputation by trying to be a perfect simulation of driving. The people who make the game obviously aren't used to this, so the title falls short.

"IF WOMEN DON'T MAKE THE EFFORT TO GET INTO THE GAMES INDUSTRY BECAUSE IT'S TOO FULL OF TESTOSTERONE, THEN IT'S THEIR FAULT, NOT THAT OF THE INDUSTRY"

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

I WAS SAD to read Lis Ries' letter (issue 20) about the games industry being pathetic and outdated – it's exactly that kind of attitude that stops it changing. If women don't make the effort to get into the games industry and just give up because there's too much testosterone floating around then it's their fault, not that of the industry.

There are many aspects of society where men used to dominate, but women made the effort to change that – politics and sport, for example. I'm not encouraging women to become the Margaret Thatcher of the games industry – please, no! – but it shows what can be done with determination.

I recently went for an assessment day at a games company for a QA position and was outnumbered by men 12-to-1, but I got through the assessment and got an interview. One of the questions I was asked was 'How would you cope working with all those men?'. My answer? I'm used to it. I'm one of only two girls on my games degree course, and so what? I can kick butt on *UT2004* as well as the guy next to me.

So to any women out there wanting to get into the games industry, just keep trying and maybe one day we can even the odds.

Lorraine Craggs

games™: It's a real shame that gaming is a predominantly male industry, particularly as it's a field that demands creativity – rather than, say, the ability to pull tractors or pee standing up – and women are just as creative as men. Yet it also seems that most of the women in the industry now work in PR and promote games rather than write them – though considering the stereotype of the games programmer, we don't really blame them…

If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting.

What makes this worse is that you criticise Nintendo for not following the crowd. It makes proper games that stick to one genre, not mixing and matching then ending up with a mess. So leave Nintendo alone and start awarding marks for originality.

Neil Pieprzak

games™: Last time we checked, we hadn't criticised Nintendo for anything (see the next letter, for example) – in fact, we've always stood behind it as a bastion of gameplay (in a completely impartial way, of course). You do have a point, though, regarding gameplay convergence; a lot of titles do seem to want to be many games at once, which waters down the purity of their gameplay. Perhaps if *Driv3r* had stuck to driving, for instance, it might not have been so disappointing.

I'M JUST WRITING to give **games™** a massive thumbs-up and big thank you for sticking up for Nintendo. The accusations thrown at the company by BBC 3's *Outrageous Fortunes* were, well, outrageous to say the least. Nintendo is not solely responsible for giving children seizures. It is a common problem in all games, just the same as it can be with TV and cinema, yet the program seemed intent on laying all the blame on Nintendo.

I'm a massive Nintendo fan and hate seeing it get such bad publicity so it is great that magazines such as yourself rally around it to help reinforce the truth and give a much better impression of Nintendo to the public.

Adam Ducker

games™: It's not just Nintendo that needs defending. We're tired of games being used as

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

TEXT LIFE...

☐ Just saw mgs3 trailer, it's sweet, but ican't help but feel like I know half the story now.
gamesTM: Well, you should have learnt your lesson from the *MGS2* trailer, then.

☐ In a season 5 episode of 'angel', spike is playing donkey kong, on an xbox, with what looks like a ps2 controller! Quite a feat!
gamesTM: True, but then he is undead – they're special like that.

☐ I tink ur mag is great but I tink u should do walk through guides and cheats, it would be so wicked. Brill mag though!!!!
gamesTM: Guides? Cheats? What kind of sicko are you?

☐ Dudes, Get down to those doomed dixons stores. I picked up Beyond good & evil for a tenner. Oh, and you were spot on about it, too. Tell me there's a sequel. Lie if you have to.
gamesTM: There's a sequel – with flying pigs in it. Happy now?

☐ Nice work on the mega-cd in ur retro section! Do u remember the name of the f1 game that came out on it? That's really bugging me! Si
gamesTM: Well, the only two we can think of are *F1 Circus CD* and *Formula One World Championship – Beyond The Limit*. Maybe that's helped to jog your memory?

☐ Just purchased Panzer Dragoon Orta and XIII 4 Xbox only £9.99 each from WHSmith. Bargain.
gamesTM: See? You can find a good deal if you look hard enough.

☐ I have loved everything about ur mag since issue1.Absolutely everything.However,with all due respect,I wish u didn't make the top 20 lists alphabetical.Sorry.
gamesTM: It's meant to be a list, not a chart – what's wrong with that?

☐ Bah! Stereotypical gamer on 'how clean is your house'… We're not all male, grubby, take-away-living-on, single-bed-sleeping-in types dammit!!
gamesTM: No – some of us are merely dishevelled, not grubby.

☐ How long will the wait b 4 the superior Xbox GTA San Andreas?Freedom fighters was great.Will there b a follow up.What happened 2 the Max Payne movie.Great mag.
gamesTM: A long time, probably not and we don't know. Oh, and thanks.

"GAMING IS NO LONGER AIMED AT SERIOUS GAMERS. WHY AREN'T OBSESSIVE, OFFLINE, MALE GAMERS WHO SEEK THE OBSCURE AND IMPORTED BEING CATERED TO ANY MORE?"

▷ a scapegoat – particularly when people with 'respected' opinions would rather point fingers instead of finding a solution. Photosensitive epilepsy is a medical condition that's as likely to be triggered by an escalator than a game… but you don't see experts calling for a ban on moving staircases, do you?

☐ **I WANT CHEAP** games. I want them, you want them, the world and his wife wants them. The problem is that not many games companies are interested in releasing their games for below £5 (spoilsports), so I've come up with a list of choices I have: 1) shoplift, 2) ask for presents, 3) get pre-owned stuff, or 4) download pirate copies from the Wonderful World of Webdom.

1) and 2) were dismissed outright, as 1) I have the thieving ability of Noddy and 2) who wants to wait till Christmas for games that are being raved about now? No-one. So that left 3) and 4). I'm lucky enough to live in a town where there are a few stores that sell pre-owned stuff, and I have broadband too, so I set out to explore the possibilities…

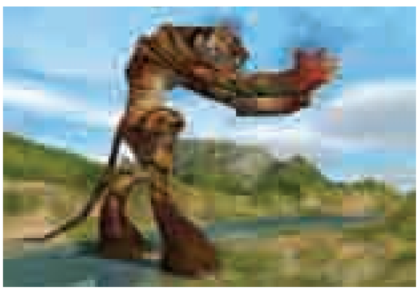
First, bad news if you're an Xbox owner. For some reason, a pre-owned Xbox game will, on average, be marked up £5 higher than a PS2 or GC version of the same game. When I asked the assistant in a well-known high-street games store why this was, he just said 'dunno'. Second, it's rare to get a game for below £14.99 whatever it is. Third, pre-owned PC titles barely exist. Fourth, *Halo* is still being sold in many stores, second-hand, for between 15 and 20 quid. Even Cash Converters was hard pressed to charge less than £12.99 for two-year-old games.

Having drawn some disappointing conclusions from 3), I moved onto 4). Wow. Bittorrent, Fasttrack, EDonkey and other networks are filled to bursting with up-to-the-minute software available for download, for free and for every format. And with PC games, there's no need to even have a chipped or modded system. What's more, there's a thriving and very pleasant community of people online who will provide you with as much help as you need to get these games working. The temptation to join in is incredible.

So those are my choices; either pay inflated prices for second-hand material from reputable shops or deprive the industry I love of the cash that has turned it from the dorky pursuit it was regarded as when I was a kid to the sport of kings it is now. I don't want to do either. And I'm aware that I can shop online at Ebay and the like, but from everything I've researched the savings aren't that great any more. As far as I can see, the pricing for second-hand games is at the stores' discretion, so can they really justify not being more reasonable with the charges? Particularly with older titles.
Nick Rolfe

gamesTM: Not likely; as long as people are willing to pay inflated prices for pre-owned titles (and someone always is), then stores will charge as much as possible. It's business – that's how it works. While we'd like to suggest making a stand might make a difference, it's a bit pointless unless you can convince every other gamer in the country to join you.

☐ **I HAVE READ** many examples of gamers developing apathy towards the hobby they love. We have to admit it, gaming today is a vastly different beast to gaming of the past, and reading any gaming mag only highlights those



Black & White taught *The Sims* everything it knows. Allegedly.



How much for second-hand *Halo*? You can stick your Warthog…

changes. If it's not a rival magazine columnist writing anti-gamer bile that's enough to make you see red, then it's companies seeking out all other forms of exploitable consumer. Games catering more for women, the visually/audio impaired and, of course, the dreaded 'casual consumer'. To heck with this damned market – why doesn't anyone cater to gamers anymore?

Then there's cross-system convergence as well as games increasingly echoing PC systems. Everyone also seems determined to push online gaming down our throats. Not to mention the scourge that is 'off-disc content' where we have to pay to download an encoded password in order to unlock extras on the disc we purchased. Where will these update patches be in a decade? Even now, I can no longer download the save files needed to unlock those extra songs in *Samba De Amigo*.

There appears to have been a resurgence in Western gaming, a new cooler style being brandished. From the ever-present Sam Fisher and his slices of banality, to *Sudeki* and its pseudo-Japanese influence trying to cater to certain gamers' tastes without really knowing why those tastes exist. Do any of these executives even know why we buy games? Clearly not, I was reminded in the recent Issue 20 'Think Tank' column. The mass market is now in control and we can only expect titles that adhere to a model of 'risk aversity'. God bless casual gamers and profit, eh?

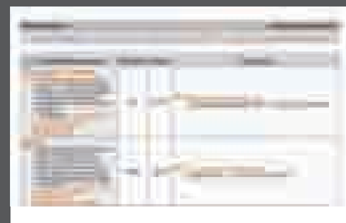
There was a time where I would play games every single day – not because I felt I should, but because I enjoyed them so thoroughly that it was all I wanted to do. Now I can scarcely manage more than a few hours a week. Gaming is no longer what I remember it as, it is no longer aimed at serious gamers. People say change is good, that change keeps things fresh, yet all I feel is the cold, grey, whip of the modern market on my back. Why aren't obsessive, offline male gamers who seek the obscure and imported being catered to anymore?

I used to love gaming to the extent I was determined to join the industry, but now I have such an ever-increasing hatred that I have changed my university course to something far removed from anything games-related.

Do you see all the above points? I don't like them, and should they continue, expect to find my control pads lynched by the very cords that bind them. Meanwhile, I'll be in the country, painting with oil colours and sipping cognac.

John Szczepaniak

games™: We see your point, though perhaps not with quite as much cynicism. What's happened here is much the same as any other industry once it gets popular – corporate attitudes take over and it all becomes about making money rather than about making games (though in the case of making games for the hearing- or visually-impaired, surely that's 'inclusivity' not 'exploitation'?). True, there are plenty of pockets of inspiration around, but creating games is now just a job to many people, rather than a vocation. Until that changes, things will never be the way they were. That's progress for you.



FROM THE FORUM

WHICH FRANCHISES HAVE OVERSTAYED THEIR WELCOME?

Brian Bloodaxe

□ Naughty Dog has said that *Jak 3* will be the last in the series, likewise *Ratchet & Clank 3* will be the last in that series. It seems like a good idea to me – let's see the franchises go out on a high (hopefully) and let the teams move onto something new for the PS3. You just have to look at the current state of *Crash* and *Spyro* to see why they are taking this approach. I enjoyed both series on the PSone but by the time the PS2 had arrived gaming had progressed beyond *Crash*'s linear levels and *Spyro*'s simplicity. So what games do you think deserve to go out with a bang rather than an eternal *Tomb Raider*-esque whimper?

Mr_T

□ *Ridge Racer* seems to have gone on too long now and Namco just seems to be cashing in on the licence. It should have given up the series on a high. On the other hand, the *Resident Evil* series certainly seems to be improving with number four on the Cube. *Tomb Raider* and *Spyro* should be put to rest, but unfortunately will still continue to sell in vast quantities. While they should have been killed off, who can blame the developers for continuing to cash in on lucrative names?

feltmonkey

□ I think the *GTA* series is starting to go a bit stale, to be honest. They're still great games, but the last two have been kind of the same, and I can't see *San Andreas* being a great leap forward. Same with the *Splinter Cell* series – number three is on the way and will in all probability be the same as the first two.

mallorn

□ Personally, I think that *Jak 3*/*R&C3* are already one game too far – I just can't see how either can be better than the two previous games. The graphics are almost as perfect as a cartoon-style game can be, the presentation is superb, the controls and camera about as good as you'll find anywhere – where is there to go that's new or original? *Tomb Raider* shouldn't be killed off for the simple reason that they haven't made any game on this generation of consoles that is anything like it. Even *AOD* is nothing like *TR* could be – it still has great potential. Games to pension off: *Tekken, DOA, Broken Sword, FF, Medal Of Honor*, all movie spin-offs and their sequels.

Jetman

□ I'm not sure how much further the *Gran Turismo* series can go. Apart from the graphics getting prettier, I can't notice any real improvement in the series.

Koffdrop

□ Although I can't guarantee it will apply to *Jak, Ratchet* or *Gran Turismo* there have been a number of occasions when I've wondered 'what can they add? How can they improve it?' when considering a sequel. In particular, I felt *SSX Tricky* was at the top of its game, so to speak. I was excited with the prospect but couldn't honestly see how they could squeeze more tricks in, or expand other areas. What I ended up with was a sequel that expanded on the original in every way. Just because *we* can't think of improvements doesn't always mean it can't be done.

Brian Bloodaxe

□ I agree with what you are saying Koff, I just think that developers should call it a day sooner rather than later and turn their talents to something new. For example, much as I enjoyed *Ico*, I would rather the team behind it turned to something new rather than trying to make another *Ico*.

“Checkpoint!”



games™
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